LITERATURE AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Proceedings of the

Twenty-Fifth International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis

Lisbon | July 2 > 7 | 2008

Edited by **Frederico Pereira**

Published by **Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada,** Lisbon

Cover plate *Título* (1986) by Autor

Photocomposed by *Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada* – Lisboa

Printed by *Printipo - Indústrias Gráficas, Lda* – Damaia

Legal Deposit 300690/09

ISBN 978-972-8400-96-5

2009

TWENTY-FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON

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Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture (SUNY-Buffalo, USA)

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

Published by **Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada**, Lisbon

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Ian McEwan's imp of the perverse

CLAIRE KAHANE[*]

In Ian McEwan's first collection of short stories, *First Love, Last Rites*, a repressed pedophiliac murders a little girl whom he has seduced into following him by promising her the sight of butterflies; in another story, "Homemade" a fourteen year old boy, pushed by his buddy to rid himself of the epithet 'virgin,' has sexual intercourse with his little sister. In an early novel, *The Comforts of Strangers*, a bored and physically attractive young couple visiting Venice fall under the spell of a decadent host, who, having stalked, then wined and dined them, ultimately drugs the woman and kills the man while she watches helplessly. Sadism, masochism, pedophilia, incest – these acts are common to McEwan's early fiction; not surprisingly, then, he has been called "a writer obsessed with the perverse" (Kiernan Ryan). And indeed, while McEwan's later fiction – *Enduring Love, Atonement, Saturday* – assimilates the perverse into more complex concerns with the world at large, McEwan still indulges his imp by obsessively introducing into his fictions scenes that shock if not awe the reader, traumatic scenes that disrupt the ordinary surface of life and shadow the remaining action. In this paper, I want to explore McEwan's early use of perverse scenarios, which seem self-consciously to exploit psychoanalytic ideas of perversion. To what end? Is the question I want to pose at the start.

But first, a major detour: What do I mean by the perverse?[1] A cursory overview suggests that perversion as a term in psychoanalysis seems one of those elastic signifiers, like hysteria, its boundaries vague, its referent inconsistent, though its etymological core is not, for central to its denotation is the idea of deviation, literally a turning away from an existing "norm" and thus implicitly a subversion of conventional values[2]. [A student recently remarked to me that when she thinks of perversion, she sees it as a visual image, a straight line with normativity at its end, and a line going off at mid point to the right to form a kind of "Y." I like that image, and that (WH)Y: it shows that the perverse always takes its direction from the norm, ie., is always in tension with it as a deviation, but also a question – why?][3].

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[1] ["Why in this enlightened day would one choose to entitle a work "Perversion" Robert Stoller asked about his book of that title some thirty years ago. Yet though he agrees that the term sounds moralistic and abhorant, Stoller goes on to assert, "perversion exists". *Perversion: The Erotic Form of Hatred*, 3.

[2] While hysteria became a useful paradigm in the 1970's for thinking about gender beyond the pathological, became indeed a politically privileged term for feminists, today it is not hysteria but perversion that has been taken over by the culture to serve a non-pathological transgressive function. Judith Butler's writings, for example, dwell on the productive power of "the negative". In negation, as Vicki Kirby points out, Judith Butler finds "the possibility of regeneration and human freedom" (11). This strategy of seeking the political potential of errancy, instability, failure, gaps, excess and deviation is a key one... and the enduring political objective in Butler's work (100).

[3] In *Saturday*, McEwan's protagonist muses on the infinite suggestiveness of jazz, given the limited number of chords, or of a Jane Austen novel: "When player and listener together know the outcome so well, the pleasure is in the deviation, the unexpected turn against the grain" (27). In this sense, the novel as a genre is itself to a great extent dependent on deviation from the norm, and could therefore be considered a perverse structure.

In psychoanalysis, which has its own norms, the turning away is primarily about sex. The sexual norm from which perversion ostensibly turns away was first laid out by Freud around the turn of the 20th century: "the achievement of orgasm by means of genital penetration"[4] – a definition which remains the straight line in most psychoanalytic thinking. And since genital penetration is a one way street – only the male organ or its fetishized counterpart can genitally penetrate – it was typically the male that was seen as the pervert, turning away from this "normal" act of heterosexual penetration, replacing it with another aim and object that avoided a direct encounter with the female genitals. Thus as Laplanche and Pontalis note, perversion is present... "where the orgasm is reached with other sexual objects (homosexuality, pedophilia, bestiality, etc), or through other regions of the body (anal coitus, oral sex); where the orgasm is subordinated... to certain extrinsic conditions which may even be sufficient in themselves to bring about sexual pleasure (fetishism, transvestitism, voyeurism and exhibitionism, sado-masochism, etc." (306).

But here the "why?" enters. Why this deviation? We know Freud's answer: to disavow – disavowal being the defining mechanism of perverse structures – the possibility of castration symbolized by the female genitals, feared as a potential punishment for transgressive wishes. Against this possibility, the male subject disavows what he sees, or does not see, regresses to an earlier state of polymorphously perverse gratifications, where bodily parts – breasts, hands, feet, eyes, hair, feces, urine – are eroticized as objects of the drive, ostensibly allowing the perverse subject to enjoy sadism and masochism, scopophilia and exhibitionism – the components of a sexuality before, or beyond, the oedipal boundaries and its prohibitions.

Moreover, it is not only actual body parts that become the objects of the drive, but also inanimate objects that are fetishized and become necessary catalysts to gratification. By replacing a fearsome absence with a presence, or the invisible and unknown of a sexuality hidden within the folds of the female body with a visible and eminently touchable material object or piece of clothing that covers over an anxiety-provoking mystery, or stands in for it, the pervert can sustain the fantasy of "nothing is missing" or "nothing is to be feared". But as has been increasingly remarked upon, this stance also disavows sexual difference insofar as difference is based on something missing. Indeed, by fetishizing material objects, perversion makes of gender-identity itself a material performance, a role indicated by the material metonymies of sexual identity. High heels, fur, keys, items of clothing – each fetish object is given meaning by its metonymic proximity to the fearsome site of female sexuality or by its metaphoric resonance in the mind of the pervert. Only recently has female fetishism been acknowledged, and women also allowed to be perverts, defined mainly through their cross-dressing or sexual masquerades, enactments that seem clearly to challenge the absolutes of sexual difference as defined by the dominant culture. Jan Matlock, for example, noted the existence of female fetishists in the psychiatric literature of early 20th century, pointing out that Clerembault and Freud removed them from the category of fetishists. Emily Apter argues for the concept of maternal fetishism, the baby often playing the role of a fetish object for the mother, a point which links up with Freud's early concept of phallic transformations: faeces, phallus, baby, all interchangeable psychic objects. And Louise Kaplan, also claiming women have their own perverse enactments, defines perversion as a psychological strategy that demands the performance of a social stereotype of masculinity or femininity. As she notes, the perverse subject enacts a rigidly repetitive and defensive sexual ritual that avoids the sight of the female genitals; like Robert Stoller, Kaplan concludes that the repeat performance is designed to help the person survive a childhood trauma with a sense of triumph over it.

In the last several decades, a host of books with varying theoretical assumptions have emerged that redefine perversion, its psychic function and its treatment. Lacanians who believe that the aim of analysis is "to allow the analysand... to enjoy his or her enjoyment" argue that insofar as the drives always seek satisfaction that might be considered perverse (Fink, 1997, 41), the aim of the treatment is by no means normalization but "to give permission for perversion" (Miller, 1996, 314). In the words of Slavoj Zizek, enjoy your symptom. In contrast, Anglo-American theorists such as Otto Kernberg

4 This definition is quoted in Laplanche and Pontalis, 131.

argue that in perversion, there is no real freedom to enjoy; perversion demands "the restriction of sexual behavior to one of the infantile partial drives *as an obligatory precondition* for the achievement of sexual excitement... All sexual perversions combine severe inhibition of sexual freedom and flexibility with the idealization of the sexual scenario derived from the particular polymorphous perverse infantile drive that is dominant" (italics mine, 2006, 22). Robert Stoller describes perversion as an erotics of hatred and emphasizes the ways in which perverse acts typically take the form of a revenge fantasy that converts childhood helplessness to narcissistic omnipotence, trauma to triumph[5]. "Perversion" Stoller remarks, "is the result of family dynamics that, by inducing fear, force the child who yearns for full immersion in the oedipal situation... to avoid it" (xvii)[6]. But avoiding oedipal conflict brings with it its own anxieties; Bruce Fink notes "the horror as well as the pleasure of living within the mother's domain of jouissance, never free to enter the ordinary world of more temperate, symbolic desires and disappointments." (Rothenberg & Foster, Introduction, 4). Somewhat analogously, within Kleinian discourse, which focuses on object-relations in the mother's domain, perversion is seen as a disavowal of the depressive phase, an inability to acknowledge separation from the mother, a defense against growing up. Insofar as perversion is a defensive strategy, sexuality becomes a means of binding a narcissistically wounded psyche through the instrumental use of another.

Clearly, as this brief overview suggests, analytic thinkers are split in their descriptions. What seems clear in these formulations, however, is that the perverse subject's restricted focus on a part object, imaginary or real, is a means of avoiding a primary engagement with another separate and gendered subjectivity[7].

Ian McEwan seems no stranger to these psychoanalytic ideas. Mcewan's first collection of stories, *First Love, Last Rites* vividly portrays through the consciousness of a child, or childlike character, perverse acts that may shock the reader, but are narrated with a kind of sexual innocence or affectlessness seemingly free from the guilt demanded by oedipal law. Indeed, McEwan suggests that the perverse enactments of his protagonists are not a function of transgressive desire for the other – the adolescent protagonist of "Homemade" who has sex with his younger sister Connie actually finds her repulsive – but a way toward imagining themselves into or out of a gendered identity. In the context of these stories, gender identity itself seems a flimsy disguise, a role these protagonists assume as if it were a costume given to them by the Other, and evoking some puzzlement as to its meanings. Or else they feel entrapped by a sexual position that is part of a self- alienating cultural repetition compulsion and opt to withdraw from human society altogether.

In the title story, "First Love, Last Rites" for example, (note that only a comma separates first love – literally the mother – from a death-ritual) a young man narrates his immersion in a dream-like summer ritual – sex on a table in an increasingly filthy room he and his girlfriend Sissel inhabit overlooking the river Ouse (a characteristically easy phonemic pun that marks much of McEwan's early writings). She is escaping from her dysfunctional family by immersing herself in an absolute present moment, refusing even to think thoughts because thinking can't be controlled and might take her elsewhere. He, a first person narrator caught in the net of his own adolescent sexual compulsions, envisions his repeated entrance into her body as a kind of existential adventure, a reverse evolution, or rather helpless devolution, into primordial part objects, a kind of masochistic fantasy that can humiliate him by precipitating premature ejaculation.

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5 Stoller distinguishes between aberrations and perversions, one attempting self cure, the other hostile attack. I prefer to treat them as one category: deviance from the oedipal norm.

6 Perversion is a psychic structure, a specific relation to the paternal function as well as more commonly a description of behaviors (4).

7 Lacan discusses Freud's insight that the sadomasochistic drive is directed toward the active sadistic subject rather than the masochistic object. "*At what moment*, says Freud, *do we see the possibility of pain introduced into the sado-masochistic drive?* – the possibility of pain undergone by him who has become, at that moment, the subject of the drive. It is, he tells us, at the moment when the loop is closed... when the subject has taken himself as the end, the terminus of the drive". (*Four Fundamentals* 183. The italics are Lacan's).

> Once I was inside her I was moved, I was inside my fantasy, there could be no separation now of my mushrooming sensations from my knowledge that we could make a *creature* grow in Sissel's belly. I had no wish to be a father, that was not in it at all. It was eggs, sperms, chromosomes, feathers, gills, claws, inches from my cock's end the unstoppable chemistry of a creature growing out of a dark red slime, my fantasy was of being helpless before the age and strength of this process and the thought alone could make me come before I wanted (118, italics mine).

This fantasy of regression to primordial life is disturbed, however, by invasive realities, one of which is Sissel's ten year old brother Adrian, who, also in a flight from family, recurrently tries to disrupt their erotic dyad and turn it into a pre-prepubescent playspace for three. More disturbing to their sexual coupling is the sound of a creature [note McEwan's use of the same term as for the imaginary fetus] gnawing on the other side of the wall – a sound the narrator at first thinks is part of his internal fantasy of feeding a "creature" inside the woman's body with his semen, a fantasy in which feeder and fed shift boundaries, in which mouth/breast/penis and fetus all flow into one another, interchangeable imaginary objects[8].

But in a move characteristic of perversion, fantasy becomes reality; the climax of this devolutionary scenario occurs when the source of the gnawing, a fat rat, finally emerges from the other side of the wall, from the hidden place of unconscious fantasy into the real world, a disgusting and dangerously frenzied real creature with teeth bared. Terrified by the actuality, after several failed attempts to catch the rat, the narrator smashes it triumphantly against the wall so that it splits open, "like ripe fruit... A faint smell crept across the room, musty and intimate, like the smell of Sissel's monthly blood" (128). After making this vivid sensory link between the pregnant rat and Sissel's sexual body, the narrator is both horrified and fascinated to discover the rat was a pregnant female, its hopeless brood still wriggling in the sac. Although the earlier phantom of a gnawing fetal-maternal creature has been made all-too-viscerally real, now the affect is reversed: the rat is transformed from a repulsive and fearsome creature with a biting mouth into an awesome maternal vessel of new life, which the now-guilty narrator has killed. Accordingly, the tone shifts from fear and disgust to a guilty awe that extends to Sissel as well. "She parted the gash in the mother rat with her forefinger and thumb pushed the bag back inside and closed the blood-spiked fur over it" (128-129). Although the description of Sissel's fingering of the gash and the blood-spiked fur has a perverse and even masturbatory resonance, this act becomes part of a religious ritual of interment for them both, the last rites that are meant to provide a resolution and an absolution. The fetal sac is pushed back into the mother; the dead rat is put gingerly into a dustbin. Afterward, in an analogous act, the narrator returns the one eel he had caught to the muddy waters of the Ouse, and returns to the sexual relation with Sissel, a relation now seemingly revivified by his confrontation with, and acceptance of, a maternally-inflected vision of death-in-life/life-in-death. Still, the last word of the story, "Yes" –an affirmation of life – seems more a literary device, Molly's "Yes" perversely stolen by McEwan from Joyce's *Ulysses* for his own purposes, than an earned transformation of the perverse scenario that has preceded it[9].

In other stories, it is not the acceptance of sexual difference but liberation from it that is the perverse spark of the pleasure of the text. Yet even in stories that play with sexual identity as a performance that can be varied, the protagonist is never free from the threat to the self – the sense of

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8 Masud Khan writes about the fusion of body images in perversion; in his description of a case, the man identified with the body of his female partner, and experienced her sensations in a shared sentience, this idealized mutuality a form of remembering/imagining his relation to the mother as a total experience (35).

9 McEwan said he actually started to write the story with Molly's "Yes" in mind. In a longer paper I discuss McEwan's desire to inhabit the mother, the primal other, who, like Molly or the great Mother Anna Livia Plurabelle, the lady of the river and the muse in and of *Finnegan's Wake,* embodies the circle of narrative itself. Modernist texts haunt McEwan's imagination as if they were internal objects, phantoms texts inhabiting his own. See Abraham and Torok's concept of "the phantom" in *The Shell and the Kernel*, 165-187.

its unreality – that such play implies, or from a frighteningly powerful maternal figure that induces a kind of primal narcissistic anxiety. "Disguises" the last story in *First Love, Last Rites,* is a perverse *tour de force* in this regard. Henry, the young protagonist, is forced to dress in a girl's clothes by his guardian aunt and mother-surrogate, Mina, a retired actress, and to play roles devised by her. The opening fragments retrospectively allude to her role-playing:

> Mina that Mina. Soft and breathy now and thick glasses too remembers her last appearance on stage. Sour Goneril at the Old Vic she took no nonsense, though friends said even then the mind of that Mina was slipping. Prompted they say, in Act One, shouting at the guilty A.S.M in the interval, and scratched him with her long vermilion nail, below the eye and to the right, a little nick across the cheek (131).

The first word, the name Mina, repeated, "*that* Mina" evokes another Mina: the female victim turned victimizer-vampire in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, an association strengthened by the reference to her "long vermilion nail" that scratched "a little nick across the cheek" in her anger at the assistant stage manager. Playing on a split identity, between role and actor, between social performance and private reality, the narrative voice literally splits Mina in two, into subject and object, into real and Real, in the next paragraph:

> Two days later Brianie died, her sister, Henry's mother, so Mina confusing dates persuaded Mina at the funeral tea, and this is what she told her friends, she gave up the stage to tend her sister's child then ten years old and in need, so Mina told her friends, of a real mother, a Real Mother. And Mina was a surreal mother.

In the kind of post-modern linguistic play that McEwan would increasingly foreground in his later fictions, Mina becomes the surreal mother, more Real (i.e., terrifying) than real (good enough).

> In the drawing room of her Islington house she drew her nephew to her, pressed his blotchy face *into the padded now and scented bosom* (*italics mine*, 132).

We might note the implication of aging shrunken breasts in "padded now" a negative image quickly enfolded in its prepositional phrase. Mina's action here repeats Dracula's perversely maternal embrace of Mina in the original novel, when Dracula forces Mina to his breast to drink his breast-blood in a seductive/oral assault, and thus raises the spectre of a specifically maternal vampirism that haunts the story[10].

In what seems to me an uncanny link to another text, the characters in "Disguises" seem to have stepped out of a case history, described by Stoller, of a young boy whose mother was ill and who has been raised by his aunt and her daughter. As Stoller writes, the women "unfortunately shared an immense hatred for males and for males' masculinity. Given the freedom to act upon him, they were able safely to attack his expanding masculinity... by altering his appearance" (71-72). When his mother came to visit "a few weeks before she died, the aunt and cousin introduced his mother to a "new neighbor girl" – a traumatizing event to which Stoller attributes his patient's subsequent transvestism[11].

While I would not want to claim that McEwan read Stoller (although certainly McEwan has a sophisticated knowledge of psychoanalytic texts), he is clearly fascinated by the ambiguity of gender identity and the play of oscillating sexual identifications. His fictions often allude to androgynous

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[10] Although games as such by their rules and structures serve to provide limits to perverse enjoyment, in "Disguises" the gender games initiated by Mina erode those limits, and threaten "to pull the subject back... to the presymbolic world in which the self is engulfed by the mother's demands... at the expense of subjectivity" (Rothenberg & Foster, 4).

[11] Stoller's work on core gender identity that is laid down in the first three years of life is the bedrock of his interpretation of the origins of perversion, which he sees as a response to the threat to one's core gender identity (73). This is Stoller's more ego-oriented reconfiguration of the more classic Freudian concept of castration anxiety as the source of perversion.

desires in his characters which, like perversions more generally, in promising to erase sexual difference, in the words of Francette Pacteau, "satisfy a narcissistic fantasy of completeness that defends against fantasies of loss and helplessness" (64)[12]. Women as well as men in McEwan's fiction can in this sense act perversely, responding defensively to the power of a fearsome maternal imago. In "Disguises" for example, it is the surrogate mother-figure Mina – a pedophilic cross-dresser – who is the pervert, a maternal sadist, who, costumed as an army officer, inducts the innocent child into perverse acts and unsettles his gender identity. And later, when Henry visits his new found school friend Linda, it is at the instigation of *her* mother that he again cross-dresses, putting on Linda's old clothes. Although the act is rationalized – it is to prevent his soiling his new clothes – wearing female clothing excites him: when he looks in the mirror, Henry becomes fascinated with his figure as a girl/boy; he sees and now also feels himself part of Linda, a Henry/Linda androgyne[13].

At the story's climax, a costume party devised by Mina, in which other people are costumed in their ordinary social dress – McEwan's throw-away comment on the conventional role playing of ordinary life – Henry, forced to appear in female dress and blonde wig, and having drunk too much, in a grotesque twinning sees his friend Linda across the room being literally man-handled by an officer who we are to understand is Mina in her military garb repeating an action Henry had experienced earlier in the story. Time and place and character all dissolve into confused fragments:

> The man in the chair was pulling Linda on to his lap, Linda and Henry, he stood in front of his bedroom mirror feeling free, made a little dance as Henry and Linda, was pulling Linda on to his lap held her tight there behind her head, she was too frightened to move, terrified and could not make her tongue move and who would hear her in all these voices?... the man in the chair pressed her face tight against him, would not let her go, Henry thought who was to blame? (165).

In a drunken helplessness Henry/Linda moves toward them as the syntax climactically mirrors the disintegration of gender distinctions in his/her own mind.

As this brief survey suggests, McEwan's early fictions use psychoanalytic concepts of perversion to depict the anxious confusion or traumatic encounter of a child or childlike character with the sexual world and the strategies necessary to ward off a fearsome and sadistic maternal figure who threatens particularly the male child. Typically, McEwan's protagonists seek protection from a female body whose mysteries both repel and seduce. The move toward a sexual identity – when it happen – often masks a perverse desire to inhabit the other, to be contained absolutely in sameness rather than separated by difference, and a corresponding fear of being lost in the other, trapped, devoured. Who am I? – the hysteric's question – is perversely answered in a psychic regression to a body not yet sexually defined, before wholeness and difference, or to a sexual masquerade which allows a play with being both sexes – responses that can also be read as defenses. In short, like Henry's school compositions in "Disguises" which mime classic gothic plots, McEwan's family romance is typically a gothic tale played out by children in the Real world[14].

But the later novels seem to have assimilated these perverse structures and to have gone beyond them. Indeed, through their engagement with the imbrications of personal and political history, they suggest an acceptance of oedipal limits and difference while also mourning the loss of a fantasmatic

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[12] Francette Pacteau talks about "the fantasy of completeness that avoids penetration – without guilt" as "an imaginary pre-oedipal condition in which psychological gender identity is not tied to physiology, but can play with possibility; fixation or regression to that psychic state" (63).

[13] Of interest in relation to "Disguises" Jann Matlock points out that clothing fetishists desire either cloth/clothing for purposes of arousal, while "costume fetishists desire sexual contact with partners wearing certain costumes or want to dress themselves in certain costumes, frequently those of the opposite sex" (33).

[14] Ironically, in a story with many gothic turns, Henry's school compositions are literally gothic plots whose well known conventions mime the perverse scenarios involving sadism, masochism, and entrapment by vampirish figures evoked by his relation to Mina.

omnipotence. Yet I think they do more: and here I offer a partial answer to my opening question: to what end does McEwan use perverse scenarios? Not only do they both express and contain primal anxieties about normative sexual roles, but they also sustain an ambivalence that is itself a mode of cultural critique, an assault on the hegemony of the norm, and on the very concept of deviation. We might recall that in the 1970's and 1980's, perversion became a political banner for groups oppressed by patriarchal norms – gays and women primarily[15]. Their call for a politics of perversion engendered new discourses, as for example queer theory, now part of mainstream academic life, and contributed significantly to the expansion of aesthetic possibilities, even to new aesthetic forms[16]. As Chasseguet-Smirgel has remarked, "Man has always endeavoured to go beyond the narrow limits of his condition. I consider that perversion is one of the essential ways and means he applies in order to push forward the frontiers of what is possible and to unsettle reality" (61). Certainly McEwan unsettles reality in his fiction, allowing at best, forcing at worst, the tectonic plates of the psyche to reveal its fissures.

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[15] See for example Mandy Merck's *Perversions: Deviant Readings by Mandy Merck (1993)*.

[16] For example, the power of waste, a perverse theme at the center of contemporary literature since Beckett, is increasingly part of a postmodernist aesthetic in which detritus and the excremental vision replaces nature as an aesthetic norm. Indeed, waste management, once the province of the mafia, as in The Sopranos, is now a cultural imperative.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 11-25

Exotic fictions of the domestic in eighteenth-century France: The case of *Paul et Virginie*[*]

SUZANNE R. PUCCI[**]

For Roland Barthes: "Le premier homme qui a vu la première photo... a dû croire que c'était une peinture: même cadre, même perspective. La Photographie a été, est encore tourmentée par le fantôme de la Peinture... ["The first man who saw the first photograph must have thought it was a painting: same framing, same perspective. Photography has been, and is still, tormented by the ghost of Painting"][1]. This essay explores the tableau in terms of its role as a "phantom" or "ghost" that effectively shadows the family photo as a previous and significant early paradigm of domestic intimacy[2]. I suggest that family photos constitute an ulterior development of eighteenth-century representations. My essay is attempting, in other words, to trace this genealogy of the family picture.

Increasingly, "intimacy" has become in the last fifteen years the object of literary, historical, social and psychological analysis, though recently the term has often been confined primarily to describing western romantic sentiments in terms of relations within and increasingly outside of conventional marriage. Such is the case in Anthony Giddens' *Transformations of Intimacy,* Zygmund Bauman's *Liquid Love: The Frailty of Human Bonds,* and Laura Berlant's edited collection entitled *Intimacy*[3]. In effect, sociologist Stephanie Coontz recently contrasts a concept of Intimacy with marital relations in her latest book, *History of Marriage,* subtitled *From Obedience to Intimacy: or How Love Conquered Marriage*[4]. "Intimacy" in these texts and contexts is a term and a concept that has been appropriated most recently to define what lies specifically outside the domestic as well as marital spheres.

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[*] This essay is reprinted with the exception of the illustrations from an essay published as "Snapshots of Family Intimacy in the French Eighteenth Century: The Case of *Paul et Virginie*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press], vol. 37 (spring 2008), ed. Linda Zionkowski and Downing Thomas, 89-119. I would like to thank the *Maison Suger: Centre international de recherche, d'acceuil et de coopération pour chercheurs étrangers de haut niveau de la Fondation Maison des Sciences Humaines*, where my residence during two months in 2006 allowed me to complete the writing and necessary research in Paris at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

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[1] Roland Barthes, *La Chambe Claire*, Cahiers du Cinéma (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 54-55. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, transl. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 30.

[2] This essay derives from my larger book-length project to be entitled "Domestic Intimacy: Snapshots of the Family in Eighteenth-Century France."

[3] I refer to such studies as those which address "intimacy" in their title such as Anthony Giddens' *Transformations of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), or Laura Berlant, ed. *Intimacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), as well

Yet the relation of intimacy to the domestic sphere does have resonance today even if the exact term is not always used. There is a current attempt in sociological studies to understand whether the *lack* of family closeness, of intimacy that many feel stems, as Coontz says, from a "nostalgia trap" for "The Way We Never Were", or whether such a thing as domestic intimacy has in a real sense has been lost and that "The Way We Really Are Now" involves coming to grips with families that are indeed changing[5]. My study employs the term "domestic intimacy" in order to raise the issue of close family sentiment which those historians, particularly of *mentalités,* have studied as emerging in the eighteenth century[6]. Thus, my interest in the subject of domestic intimacy derives from a question I pose at a time in contemporary society when intimacy has come into focus as a problematic notion both in terms of conjugal and couple relations as well as in terms of a mythical and/or changing landscape of the family.

An often neglected aspect of what now binds or what in the past bound family members together is the way this closeness or lack thereof was and is conceived, perceived; that is, how it has been represented at particular moments and through which media. I do not look here to historical or sociological evidence to understand attitudes in the late eighteenth century toward the question of family bonds. Rather, this essay turns to the textual and/or pictorial strategies that uncover the inclinations and (dis)avowed desires and tendencies as they inhabit and organize representations of domestic intimacy.

In his text *Emile*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau mentions, seemingly in passing, what became in effect a powerful cultural convention: "Il n'y a point de 'tableau' plus charmant que celui de la famille" (my emphasis)[7]. "Picture" here could refer to painting or engraving, as well as to a concept of tableau, but of course, certainly not to the photograph of late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet Rousseau articulated what did emerge in the nineteenth-century photograph and what remains operative today as well: the family as a domestic unit is "charming" perhaps because it is conceptualized and often conceived as a cohesive picture.

Rousseau goes on in this beginning of Book I of *Emile* to elaborate on the dangers and pitfalls that can disrupt such a charming picture[8]. What disfigures ["défigure"] the picture of the family is precisely the dispersion of its members: if the children are "*eloignés*", or *"dispersés"* in convents, colleges, etc., they no longer dwell in the home; as Rousseau says, they are *"ailleurs",* "elsewhere." They thus dwell outside the common space of "the paternal home" and outside the picture as well. Even at such times as they might gather for a family ceremony, when they will be *"rassemblés",* they would remain distant, *"étrangers*" ["strangers"] to each other. The sense of family union is generated from notions of the collective living space. The spatial elements of the tableau are paralleled

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as books which while not featuring "intimacy" in the title nevertheless make it a major concern throughout the study. These include Zygmund Baumann's *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), and Richard Sennett's *The Fall of Public Man* (New York and London: Alfred Knopf, 1977; W.W. Norton, 1992).

4 Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2005).

5 Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgic Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 1992).

6 This includes such historians as Phillipe Ariès, Georges Duby, Roger Chartier, Daniel Roche, etc., and projects such as *Histoire de la vie privé*e, sous la direction de Philippe Ariès et Georges Duby, 5 vols (Paris: Seuil, 1985, 1999).

7 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, eds. Bernard Gagnebin et Marcel Raymond, édition de La Pléiade (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), 262 ["There is no more charming picture than that of the family..."].

8 The entire passage, reads as follows:
Il n'y a point de tableau plus charmant que celui de la famille, mais un seul trait manqué défigure tous les autres. Si la mère a trop peu de santé pour être nourrice, le père aura trop d'affaires pour être précepteur. Les enfans, éloignés, dispersés dans des pensions, dans des couvens, dans des collèges, porteront ailleurs l'amour de la maison paternelle, ou pour mieux dire, ils y rapporteront l'habitude de n'être attachés à rien. Les frères et les soeurs se connoitront à peine. Quand tous seront rassemblés en cérémonie, ils pourront être fort polis entre eux; ils se traitteront en étrangers. Sitôt qu'il n'y a plus d'intimité entre les parens, sitôt que la société de la famille ne fait plus la douceur de la vie, il faut bien recourir aux mauvaises mœurs pour y suppléer. Où est l'homme assés stupide pour ne pas voir la chaîne de tout cela (262).

by the enclosures of the paternal home. From the moment family members do not inhabit the same space, they become distant strangers to each other. And once they have left the home they are no longer part of the picture. The unity of both family and its collective image is threatened. To put it another way, the spatial organization that defines tableau also constitutes a principal defining criterion of the thriving "charming" family. The family picture is thus not just a convenient metaphor for representing domestic intimacy; here, it is also an analogue that introduces and thematizes a spatial model.

Whether a nostalgic idea of the past, an ideal never actually realized, or a truly lost history, domestic intimacy claims a salient place in western conventions of the family in the eighteenth century as well as in contemporary culture through a vital link to pictorial representation. Rousseau is certainly not alone in identifying new family sentiment within the frame of a spatial entity such as the tableau. Diderot's use of "tableau" was crucial to his aesthetic and social theory of bourgeois drama, as Peter Szondi first pointed out in his distinction between Diderot's notion of "Tableau versus coup de théâtre"[9]. Indeed, examples of this privileged figure of "tableau" abound in Diderot's critical writing about theater as well as in his plays. The *philosophe* is struck, for instance, by the picture of maternal love in a particular scene of Racine's tragedy *Iphigenia*. Diderot singles out her domestic role in contrast to the public or political role of Iphigenia's mother, and this focus takes shape in his discussion precisely within the semantic and visual frame of "tableau":

> Si la mère d'Iphigénie se montrait un moment reine D'Argos et femme du général des Grecs, elle ne me paraîtrait que la dernière des créatures. La véritable dignité, celle qui me frappe, qui me renverse, c'est le *tableau de l'amour maternel* dans toute sa vérité[10].

The sentiment of domestic love that Diderot identifies here with tableau becomes the central preoccupation of this new genre of domestic tragedy. I have discussed Diderot's dramatic theories and theatrical practice in his plays *Le fils naturel* and *Le Père de famille*, which were both constructed on the model of the tableau: these plays featured description of stage props clearly demarcating the enclosures of domestic interiors; characters both physically and discursively framed within family blood relations; thematic boundaries distinguishing between strangers, even intruders, and family members within; frames sharply delimiting the stage from an audience positioned external to it[11]. Diderot's and Rousseau's configuration of family in and as tableau participates in and helps institute a western tradition that dictates the experience of family attachment as deeply rooted in the

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My translation:
["There is no more charming tableau than that of the family, but only one missed feature disfigures all the rest. If the mother has too poor a health to nurse, the father will be too busy to be their tutor. The children, far away, dispersed in pensions, convents, schools, will always bring elsewhere the love of the paternal home, or to say it better, they will develop the habit of being attached to nothing. Brothers and sisters will scarcely know each other. When assembled all together for special events, they might be very polite to each other; they will treat each other as strangers. As soon as there is no longer any intimacy between the parents, as soon as the society of the family no longer constitutes the pleasures of life, there is necessary recourse to bad habits as compensation. Where is the man stupid enough not to see the chain linking all that"].

9 Peter Szondi, "Tableau and Coup de Théâtre: On the Social Psychology of Diderot's Bourgeois Tragedy", *New Literary History*, 11.2 (1980): 323-343.

10 Denis Diderot, *Œuvres esthétiques*, ed. Paul Vernière (Paris: Garnier, 1965), 91, my emphasis and my translation:
"If the mother of Iphigenia behaved for one moment as the Queen of Argos and wife of the Greek commanding general, she would seem to me the least worthy of creatures. True dignity, that which strikes me, which astounds me, is *the tableau of maternal love* in all its truth"].
For Jay Caplan, "The tableau in Diderot is a sort of fetishistic snapshot in which the transitoriness of the real world is magically transformed into an ideal fixity" (*Diderot's Geneology of the Beholder* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985], 18. As I am developing it here, the *tableau* is linked most specifically to the fixity of the ideal family.

11 "Snapshots of the Family: Picture Perfect", *Esthetics of Intimacy/Esthétiques de l'intime, L'Esprit Créateur*, eds. Elizabeth Arnould-Bloomfield and Suzanne R. Pucci, 44.1 (2004): 68-82.

enclosures and frames of pictures and ultimately in the snapshots that in our own century document but also still give shape to domestic intimacy.

In effect, those whose objective as historians is to document the family tend themselves to use the picture and its frames or enclosures to delineate domestic intimacy in its substantive difference from earlier models. Thus, Lawrence Stone refers to the "more sealed off and private family type that was to develop in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries;" indeed, Stone speaks of "walling off of the nuclear family"[12]. It is no coincidence that the historian Raffaella Sarti introduces her book on the early modern European family in terms of a painting:

> If this book is a painting, then what does it depict? And what does the frame exclude? The title provides the answer: *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture 1500-1800*. Its spatial and chronological boundaries are those of Europe in the early modern era[13].

Sarti describes her history of the family in terms of temporal boundaries that parallel architectural and spatial boundaries of the home and that constitute as well the conceptual enclosures of home.

Most importantly, Philippe Ariès emphasizes the introduction of a new kind of interaction between family members in terms of a distinctly spatial model reminiscent of the enclosure of tableau:

> Dans le monde des sentiments et des valeurs, la famille ne comptait pas [auparavant] autant que le lignage. Or [ce lignage] apparaît très différent du *sentiment de famille*, tel qu'on l'a vu se dégager de l'iconographie des 16ème-17ème siècles... [Le lignage] s'étend aux liens du sang sans égard aux valeurs nées de *la cohabitation et de l'intimité. Le lignage n'est jamais réuni dans un espace commun, autour d'une même cour. Au contraire, le sentiment de famille est lié à la maison, au gouvernement de la maison, à la vie dans la maison*[14].

"Maison" in French refers of course both to the house, its architectural and physical properties as a domicile, as well as to the sense and sentiment of home. The relation between architectural and emotional enclosures becomes explicit here as Ariès' remark reveals a new focus that in my opinion reflects a major cultural shift reorienting the representation of family experience from a previously dominant *diachronic* model of lineage to a *synchronic*, thus indeed spatial, model of domestic intimacy.

The historical line of descendents passing from one generation to the next offers a concept of family that is diachronic, that is, developed and continued through time, while the synchronic presents a distinctly spatial model formulated in and as the place of house and home. As Ariès remarks, "a common space, a single courtyard" is where the "line", or lineage, is gathered into one common collective entity. The opposition between genealogical relations linking family members across generations, even distant centuries, and the contrasting interaction of individuals relating in a simultaneous contemporary moment within a particular intimate domestic space introduces a useful and suggestive paradigm, one that explains, at least in part, Ariès' own emphasis on representation

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[12] Lawrence Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1977 [1979, 1982]), 69; 149.

[13] Raffaella Sarti, *Europe at Home: Family and Material Culture, 1500-1800*, trans. by Allan Cameron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 3; *Vita de Casa, Abitare, mangiare, vestire nell'Europa* (Rome, Italy: Laterza & Figli, 1999).

[14] Philippe Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Plon, 1960), 239, my emphasis; Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (New York: Random House, 1962), 356:
[In the world of sentiments and values, the family didn't count previously as much as lineage... Now, [lignage] is very different from the concept of family such as we have seen it develop in the iconography of the 16th and 17th centuries. [Lineage] extended to the ties of blood without regard to the emotions engendered by *cohabitation and intimacy. The line was never gathered together within a common space, around a single courtyard. On the contrary, the sentiment of family is tied to the house, to the government of the house, to life in the house* (this last important sentence of the quote was left out in Baldick's English translation of the French text. The translation and emphasis are mine).

and iconography throughout his book. From the family conceived in the chronological blood filiations of genealogy according to the model of lineage, a major shift takes effect to a *spatial model* of the domestic: to the *domestic* articulated as a *spatial* entity. I propose this shift to spatial enclosure and simultaneous interaction within that space as an explicit paradigm for those "charming pictures of the family" that retain a certain continuity throughout early modern society and that carry over into our own current preoccupation with photographs, with snapshots of the family.

For Richard Sennett, the "home" during this early modern period became the secular version of spiritual refuge, what he terms the "geography of enclosure.**"** A new "geography of safety**"** was established in a "shift from sanctuaries in urban centers such as the protective spaces surrounding the cathedral to the enclosures of the domestic interior"[15]. The move to a new intimacy of the domestic interior takes place through the multiple enclosures that mark off and separate those excluded from those who dwell within the bounded spatial and simultaneously constructed sentimental formation and formulation of home. Ariès relies in his book on spatial representation, on family pictures to document, to *explain* the shift to the new social and cultural phenomenon of domestic intimacy; my own perspective locates these prevalent spatial representations as constitutive themselves of the phenomenon of domestic intimacy.

These "charming tableaux" elaborate spatial and visual properties that were produced in often exclusively verbal as well as in theatrical and in actual pictorial representations, such as in the growing number of genre paintings exemplified by Greuze's depictions of domestic dramas and interiors. Yet, the measure of the tableau as an exceptionally operative paradigm of domestic intimacy can be illustrated just as well if not tested perhaps best of all in fiction. Although conceived at this time mainly as linear and chronological, narrative is in effect enlisted toward new, contrasting ends, specifically in the text of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel *Paul et Virginie*. Published in 1788[16], 1789, 1800, and throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it became a best seller of huge proportions, published in more than 500 editions through 1960[17]. One reason it might have garnered such interest is this novel's subversion of its generic form by deploying a shift to spatial as opposed to linear and temporal paradigms. And the determining cause for this shift is directly traceable to the dominant concern in this text with representing domestic intimacy.

Initially, the novel appeared as part of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's larger work, *Etudes de la nature,* studies on the flora and fauna as well as on the society and culture of the island he visited, Mauritius (then called the Ile de France). Its success was such that it soon had become translated in many European languages; thus, in the last thirteen years of the century it was published in thirty-six French editions and twenty translations[18]. *Paul et Virginie* overdetermines the "geography of enclosure" in this tale of exotic distances whose principal subject turns out, surprisingly, to be domestic intimacy. In effect, the novel short-circuits a linear development of the plot by depicting

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15 Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye* (New York: Knopf, 1990: Norton, 1992), 21.

16 Jacques-Henri-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie* in *Etudes de la Nature,* (Paris: P.F. Didot le jeune, 1788), vol. IV, 1-227, BN (Res. P. R. 641).

17 The popularity of this text was enormous. As Robert Mauzi relates: "*Paul et Virginie* fut après *La Nouvelle Héloïse* et *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, le dernier triomphe de la littérature Romanesque du XVIIIième siècle" (*Paul et Virginie,* Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, éd. établie par Robert Mauzi [Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1966; Flammarion, 1992], 9) ["*Paul &Virgine* was after the *Nouvelle Héloïse* and *Les Liaisons dangereuses* the last triomphe of Romanesque literature of the eighteenth century"]. The number of editions of this novel from the time of its initial publication is quite astounding. And the accompanying prints that were published almost from the beginning (and that I will discuss) continued to proliferate in most editions as well as to appear independently without the text of the novel. See Paul Toinet (Paul et Virginie*: Répertoire bibliographique et iconographique* [Paris*:* G.-P. Maisonneuve et Larose, 1963]), who enumerates the more than 500 editions of the novel in 170 years from the time of its appearance until 1963; his book also traces the diverse sets of prints that appeared separately from the novel.

18 At first, the novel *Paul et Virginie* was placed within the larger work volume IV of *Etudes de la nature*, published in 1788. The first time this novel appeared separately was in 1789. Speaking of the novel's astounding success, P. Toinet proclaims:

from the very outset its tragic end. Along with its geographical distance from France, from Europe, comes a temporal distance which, we will see, also entails a spatial displacement from the story's events. These are strategies which employ narrative in the service of fashioning a picture. In the novel's first sentence, we are transported to a far away place and to a distant time:

> "Sur le côté oriental de la montagne qui s'élève derrière le Port-Louis de l'Ile de France, on voit dans un terrain jadis cultivé, les ruines de deux petites cabanes"[19].

These cabins are the vestige of lives now over; they become a focus for the story which has already ended before it has begun. As European readers, we are not just far from this land geographically; we also have been positioned outside the temporal limits of events that have already taken place. The reader is situated as spectator, as viewer of "ruins" whose history we are about to uncover as in a kind of archeological excavation. Far from being placed *in medias res* of the characters' dilemmas or actions, the reader beholds the site of the island and the story from the distant quiet and stasis of its aftermath, its tomb.

Most significant in this *incipit* to *Paul et Virginie* is the detailed picture of the natural setting that necessitates a spectator's, a listener's as opposed to a reader's, perspective:

> A l'entrée de ce bassin, ... les échos de la montagne répètent sans cesse le bruit des vents qui agitent les forêts voisines, et le fracas des vagues qui brisent au loin sur les récifs; mais au pied même des cabanes on n'entend plus aucun bruit, et on ne voit autour de soi que de grands rochers escarpés comme des murailles[20].

The crashing of waves and whipping of the wind that form the backdrop and offer a visual and audible panorama create a profound silence by forming a protective barrier around the cabins. And this silence that surrounds the viewer/reader disconnecting us from the past of any noise or life of the former inhabitants has a distinctly visual counterpart in the "huge rocks" ["escarpés]" that surround one like walls. The effect of such textual indices is to frame through distancing and separating the world that once resided within that domain from the rest of the island, from Europe and France, and from the reader/viewer. As also becomes clear, this representation functions in its physical, visual, and (non) audible depictions to cut off the time of the story from the time of the narration itself. The novel enlists silence and ruins for a purpose that coincides with its subversion of narrative structure.

Car, ce succès, il fut d'emblée foudroyant et universel: si l'édition originale, enrobée dans les *Etudes de la Nature* est de 1788, la première édition séparée hors de France – peu importe qu'elle ait été une contrefaçon – est de la même année; si la première édition séparée en France est de 1789, elle est de la même année en Angleterre, de 1791 en Italie, de 1794 en Allemagne, de 1798 en Espagne. Les treize années du xviii ième siècle finissant voient apparaître 56 éditions dont 36 du texte français et 20 de traductions; encore ne faut-il pas oublier les adaptations théâtrales et les gravures ou suites de gravures séparées" (*Paul et Virginie: Répertoire bibliographique et iconographique,* 2).
[For, this success was from the start amazing and universal: if the original edition, enclosed in *Studies of Nature* is from 1788, the first separate edition outside of France – no matter that it had been pirated – is from the same year; if the first separate edition in France dates from 1789, it dates from the same year in England, from 1791 in Italy, from 1794 in Germany, from 1798 in Spain. The last thirteen years of the eighteenth century saw 56 editions 36 of which in French and twenty translations; moreover, the theatrical adaptations and the engravings or separate sets of engravings should not be forgotten].

19 ["On the eastern side of the mountain which rises behind Port-Louis of the Ile de France, one can see on a piece of once cultivated land the ruins of two small cabins."]. *Paul et Virginie,* préface, commentaires, notes par Jacques Van Den Heuvel (Paris: Le Livre de pôche, 1984), 155. All quotations from the novel will be taken from the above illustrated edition which derives from: Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie* (Paris: L. Curmer, 1838, 1938), BN [Y2 758, Y2 186, etc.]. All English translations of *Paul et Virginie* are my own.

20 *Paul et Virginie,* 155-157. ["At the entrance to this basin..., echoes from the mountain incessantly repeat the sound of winds that stir the neighboring forests, and the fracas of waves that break far away on the reefs; but at the foot itself of the cabins one can no longer hear any noise at all; one can only see the surrounding huge rocks steep as walls"].

Narrative voice plays a crucial role in this strategy of estrangement and framing. Though first-person discourse does emerge after the opening lines in the figure of a traveler attracted by this site in his trips around the island, the initial description takes place in the third-person-impersonal "*on*" ["*one*"]. Nothing personalizes the estrangement and separation that permeate the novel's opening picture ("On n'entend plus aucun bruit, on ne voit autour de soi..."). Following the introductory paragraph, a shift to first-person narration seemingly brings the text into line with conventional eighteenth-century fictional discourse. Yet, the first-person "I", so customary from Montesquieu to Rousseau and throughout the popular eighteenth-century epistolary genre, functions here to attenuate the importance and effect of first-person narration, in which, as Montesquieu said about telling one's own story, "D'ailleurs, ces sortes de romans réussissent parce que l'on rend compte soi-même de sa situation actuelle; ce qui fait plus sentir les passions que tous les récits qu'on en pourrait faire"[21].

In effect, the first-person narrator – this anonymous stranger on the island – meets and immediately defers to the narrative of a second first-person narrator, an old man, a *vieillard*, who knew and loved the cabin dwellers and witnessed all past events of the story leading to this scene of desolation. This solitary witness only at moments is actually incorporated into the story; he represents himself consistently as belonging to the *outside* of the story, to its frames. Thus, the first-person here is the one who is actually the furthest from the story. For what he will recount will be for the most part not his own; his voice is placed at various removes from the events and situation of the main characters. Thus, we are relayed from a pictorial scene and a disembodied perspective of "one who sees" ["on voit"] or "hears" ["on n'entend plus"], to an anonymous traveler beholding the tableau of sea and landscape which enclose the cabins, to a narrator who does not belong to the family whose story he will tell but who, mainly as spectator himself, witnessed the lives of those whose absence, whose distance is so pronounced, so acutely and carefully measured and whose lives are seemingly so inaccessible.

Yet it is precisely these manifold separations, distances and estrangements produced at the outset – geographical, spatial, temporal, narrative – that constitute the crucial frames that enclose and illustrate within them a tableau of domestic intimacy. Like the initial descriptions of the exotic silent and solitary place of the two cabins, other pictures are introduced throughout that insist on the complementary attributes of distance and proximity as crucial signifiers of domestic intimacy. The narrative systematically dissolves all the initially imposed distances and boundaries.

The story tells of two women, one of modest birth called throughout the novel only Marguérite and one of aristocratic lineage, Mme de la Tour, both of whom from a necessity born of scandal have fled into exile far from French society and their own blood relations. Mme de la Tour fled with her beloved husband from the family who had spurned her choice of a less than aristocratic *gentilhomme*. On the other end of the social spectrum, Marguérite, from a simple Breton family, had been abandoned by an aristocratic lover despite her pregnancy. In both cases, the scandal stems from social conventions based on lineage and birthright that interfere with, indeed preclude conjugal and familial love or accord. The tension in French society between such dominant social conventions and the growing importance of domestic life and sentiments are separated into contrasting geographic sites and worlds. The exotic Mauritius in this way becomes the site of a new kind of domestic world.

The exile of these women is articulated from the outset in spaces that signify at the same time both estrangement and all-encompassing enclosures. Leaving Europe behind and a husband who soon died trying to provide for them, Mme de la Tour seeks "un petit coin de terre" where she and her one possession, a woman slave from Madagascar, might cultivate enough to live on[22]. Mme de la Tour

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[21] Montesquieu, *Lettres persanes,* texte présenté et commentaires par Laurent Versini (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1986), 43. "D'ailleurs, ces sortes de romans réussissent ordinairement, parce que l'on rend compte soi-même de sa situation actuelle; ce qui fait plus sentir les passions que tous les récits qu'on en pourrait faire" ["Besides, these kinds of novels usually succeed because one renders an account oneself of one's present situation; which makes one feel more passions than all the stories one can tell about them" (my translation)].

[22] *Paul et Virginie,* 160 ["a little piece of land"].

seeks out a place even more remote and removed from the already scarce population of the island. Thus, she leaves the city of Port-Louis and moves from the "île presque déserte" to an even more remote site where she hopes to find an "asile caché" and where she can "s'y retirer comme dans un nid"[23]. Her desire to "se réfugier" to "take refuge, to withdraw", is complemented by the appearance of Marguérite already settled at the deserted site and by their progressively concerted joint attempt to raise their children. Terms abound that signify enclosure: "enclos", "retraites charmantes", "retraites paisibles" etc.[24]. The description of these women, their children born on the island (Paul and Virginie), and their faithful servants who establish intimacy also among themselves with their marriage, draws numerous protective enclosures around the domain of their cabins, their land, and their reciprocal emotional attachments.

In contrast to the lineage of blood relations which both at the beginning and at the end of the novel reaches from France as far as Mauritius to differentiate between social and economic classes and privileges, causing disruption and ultimately disintegration of the family entity, the two households share everything. They become one unit in which can be discerned no differentiation, no spatial, temporal, or emotional distance. Marguérite and Mme de la Tour are united by the same needs and almost identical misfortunes, calling each other "les doux noms d'amie, de compagne, de sœur; elles n'avaient qu'une volonté, qu'un intérêt, qu'une table. Tout entre elles était en commun"[25]. In cabins which are contiguous, each woman owning a slave married to the slave of the other, their parcels of land like their homes are not just touching, they are cultivated each for the other; they dissolve into one[26].

The narrator recounts the dissolution not just of territorial and property boundaries but of all barriers. In constant focus, this new domestic intimacy is carried over from mothers onto the relations between them and their children, and between Paul and Virginie. Like brother and sister, they are fed at the same breast, each woman nursing her own and the child of the other mother: "Elles prenaient plaisir à les mettre ensemble dans le même bain, et à les coucher dans le même berceau. Souvent elles les changeaient de lait"[27]. More and less than siblings, these two children, like twins, like lovers, occupy the same cradle, the same bed, the same small enclosure of the bath, the same daily and hourly space: "La nuit même ne pouvait les séparer; elle les surprenaient souvent couchés dans le même berceau, joue contre joue, poitrine contre poitrine, les mains passées mutuellement autour de leurs cous, et endormis dans les bras l'un de l'autre"[28].

Incest in a sense is not a threat since the children are not blood related; yet their physical and emotional closeness is informed by the appellations of brother and sister early on: "Lorsqu'ils surent parler, les premiers noms qu'ils apprirent à se donner furent ceux de frère et de sœur"[29]. These terms are only partially metaphorical. The intimate proximity of their everyday lives lacks only genetic ties which are compensated by the insistence everywhere on the absence of distance or separating boundaries. Sibling incest here is both avoided and consistently intimated. Their latent romantic attachment is prevented from developing into a fully sexual, indeed marital, rapport only by the death of Virginie in the latter part of the novel; but their relation serves the purpose of signaling an

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23 *Paul et Virginie,* 160 ["almost deserted island"]; ["hidden sanctuary"]; ["withdraw there as in a nest"]; ["to take refuge there"].

24 *Paul et Virginie,* 193 ["enclosures"]; 194 ["charming retreats"]; 199 ["peaceful retreats"].

25 *Paul et Virginie,* 167, 169 ["the sweet names of friend, of companion, of sister; they had only one will, one interest, one table. Everything between them was in common"].

26 *Paul et Virginie,* 166.

27 *Paul et Virginie,* 169 ["They took pleasure in washing them in the same bath and in putting them to sleep in the same cradle. Often they exchanged their milk"].

28 *Paul et Virginie,* 170 ["Even night couldn't separate them; it surprised them often sleeping in the same cradle, cheek against cheek, breast against breast, their hands mutually clasped around each other's neck, asleep in each other's arms"].

29 *Paul et Virginie*, 170 ["When they learned how to talk, the first names they learned to call each other were those of brother and sister"].

affirmative, desirable if unresolved ambiguous link between romantic love, conjugal relations and domestic intimacy[30].

The concrete proximity within the quotidian creates the love that binds individuals to each other in contrast to the ties of blood relations alone which remain in this novel abstract and distant geographically as well as sentimentally. Here as elsewhere in the eighteenth century the model of close family sentiment and attachment is articulated, as we saw above in the passage from Rousseau, in pictures of enduring continuous physical, emotional, temporal and spatial proximity. As Virginia says, "Tout ce qui a été élevé ensemble s'aime"[31].

Thus, lineage and blood relations are persistently trumped by, and rerouted through, those ties that become intimate in the experience and shared sentiment of living in close domestic proximity. Multiple terms work to minimize any space, physical and or sentimental, separating the members of this utopic clan and in particular of Paul and Virginie. Lack of distance and separation in terms such as "attachement" abound: "Rien en effet n'était comparable à l'attachement qu'ils se témoignaient déjà"[32]. As the old man observed the two children one day taking refuge from the rain: "Ces deux têtes charmantes renfermées sous ce jupon bouffant me rappelèrent les enfants de Léda enclos dans la même coquille"[33].

So overdetermined is the emphasis on intimacy in this domestic vision that everything distant takes on negative value, particularly anything coming from Europe. Thus, Mme de la Tour a propos of a nasty letter from her aunt in Paris: "Le malheur ne m'est venu que de loin; le bonheur est autour de moi"[34]. Within these delineated spaces, even the children's education underscores a rejection of distant past and far away events in favor of local, present intimacy repeated endlessly in the replication of everyday ritual:

> Ils ne s'inquiétaient pas de ce qui s'était passé dans des temps reculés et loin d'eux, leur curiosité ne s'étendait pas au-delà de cette montagne. Ils croyaient que le monde finissait où finissait leur île; et ils n'imaginaient rien d'aimable où ils n'étaient pas[35].

Indeed, the temporal dimension of Paul and Virginie's childhood is basically transformed into a repetition of their daily life pattern in which each day and activity resembles, is identical, to the next: "Chaque jour était pour ces familles un jour de bonheur et de paix"[36]. The experience of close sibling and parental relations where there are no differences coincides with this insistence throughout the first

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30 Reference to their eventual marriage and "félicité conjugale" ["conjugal felicity"] is made by the two mothers from the children's infancy (169). See my essay, "The Nature of Sibling Incest and Domestic Intimacy in Diderot's *Le Fils naturel*" *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 30.3 (1997): 271-287, in which I discuss the many eighteenth-century representations of near sibling incest as a formulation of a new kind of close family attachment. One hypothesis for its repetition is that intimate emotional experience was identified primarily until then as romantic love. Because of its component as intimate emotional experience, which was known then particularly as romantic love, this new familial close sentiment is articulated through those already known conventions of amorous sentiment. Sibling intimacy/incest functions as in the rhetorical figure of catachresis. This is a figure, like the *leg* of a table, a term borrowed to signify what doesn't (yet) have its own name. This essay along with my article mentioned above, "Snapshots of the Family: Picture Perfect" shows a similar process of framing in both theater and narrative. As my book-length study on domestic intimacy will reveal, the tableau with its frames and focus on simultaneous grouping/delimiting of family within the same space functions in painting, theater and as shown throughout my article here in narratives of the later eighteenth century.

31 *Paul et Virginie,* 216 ["All who have been raised together love each other"].

32 *Paul et Virgine,* 170 ["Nothing in effect was comparable to the attachment they already showed each other"].

33 *Paul et Virginie*, 171 ["Those two charming heads enfolded in these bouffant skirts reminded me of the children of Leda enclosed in the same shell"].

34 *Paul et Virginie*, 177-178 ["Misfortune has come to me only from afar; happiness is right next to me"].

35 *Paul et Virginie*, 171 ["They were unconcerned by what happened in distant times and far away from them; their curiosity didn't extend beyond this mountain. They believed that the world finished with their island; they imagined that nothing could be agreeable there where they weren't"].

36 *Paul et Viginie,* 191 ["Every day was for these families a day of happiness and peace"].

part of the story on similarity and resemblance between daily recurring activities. One of the rare uses of the narrator's first-person "I" comes as the old man recounts the meals he shared with them: "Combien de fois, à l'ombre de ces rochers, ai-je partagé vos repas champêtres...?"[37]. Even the seasons resemble each other from year to year as they form the background for activities that in their recurrence suspend movement and time.

> Dans la saison pluvieuse ils passaient le jour tous ensemble dans la case, maîtres et serviteurs, occupés à faire des nattes d'herbes et des paniers de bambou. On voyait rangés dans le plus grand ordre aux parois de la muraille des râteaux, des haches, des bêches; et auprès de ces instruments de l'agriculture les productions qui en étaient les fruits, des sacs de riz, des gerbes de blé, et des régimes de bananes[38]...

The rain outside helps focus this picture of intimate family life within the confines of their modest cabin as in a genre scene; while the description of the tools positioned along the walls with the fruits of their labor arranges these objects almost as would a still life painting. Whether it be the storms of the season or the stories told to the children of robbers and shipwrecks, the outside often hostile world repeatedly frames this little familial utopic society within the safety of its own company and walls:

> La nuit venue, ils soupaient à la lueur d'une lampe; ensuite Mme de la Tour ou Marguérite racontaient quelques histoires de voyageurs égarés la nuit dans les bois de l'Europe infestés de voleurs, ou le naufrage de quelque vaisseau jeté par la tempête sur les rochers d'une île déserte"[39].

Stories of lost travelers, European thieves and violent shipwrecks surround the family like a cocoon, separating fictions of lost souls, adventure and danger from the eventless everyday of home until a real ship erupts into the plot, wrecking the tranquility as well as the unity of the family and breaking up the family picture. Before this catastrophic event which begins with Virginie's taking the ship to France and her aunt in Paris to claim her birthright and rightful place within the family lineage – before the shipwreck that ruins all hope of Virginie's reaching again the sacred boundaries of home – the plot languishes. The insistent present and local symmetry of everyday domestic repetition and stasis have allowed, in effect, no interruption, little action, no event[40]. The family tableau remains intact as a fixed unity unto itself due in great part to the narrative which, particularly in this first section of the novel, functions to undermine its own generic linear tendencies.

The first-person narrative of the *vieillard*, as discussed earlier, functions most often in the capacity of a first-person but who disappears into the voice of a spectator or witness – a witness to family unity, a necessary spectator to their story, to their family pictures. Earlier in the century, such an external first-person voice is often found in the preface to novels such as in Marivaux's *La Vie de Marianne,* the "I" of the Preface. This "I" refers to one who found Marianne's "authentic" manuscript and delivered it to an editor; or, in the case of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*, the preface presents the first-person voice of a neighbor who lived for years next to the two Persians and who introduces their letters through his role as mere mediating translator. The *vieillard* of *Paul et Virginie* is a neighbor as well who in the second part

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37 *Paul et Virgine,* 201 ["How many times in the shadow of these rocks did I share your rustic meals...?"].

38 *Paul et Virginie,* 201 ["In the rainy season, they spent the day all together in the cabin, masters and servants, occupied in making braids of herbs and baskets of bamboo. On could see arranged in the greatest order on the wall rakes, hatchets, hoes; and next to these instruments of agriculture the fruits of their labors, sacks of rice, sheaves of wheat, bunches of bananas"].

39 *Paul et Virginie,* 201 ["Come night, they supped by the light of a lamp; then Mme de la Tour or Marguérite recounted some stories of travelers lost in the night in the woods of Europe infested with robbers, or the shipwreck of some ship thrown by the storm against the rocks of a deserted island"].

40 See Robert Mauzi (*Paul et Virginie,* édition établie par R. Mauzi [Paris: Garnier-Flammarion 1992], Préface, 20) who comments on the lack of event in the first part of the novel: "Toute une première partie du récit est consacrée à l'évocation du monde détruit, monde immobile où le temps ne coule pas, où il ne se passé rien. Les anecdotes, les épisodes n'introduisent aucune action" ["The whole first part of the narrative is devoted to evoking a world destroyed, immobile where time doesn't pass, where nothing happens"].

of the story plays a larger though not really personal role in the story. He recounts, witnesses and will even share in the family sorrow, attempting, without success, to help Paul overcome the loss of Virginie with the wisdom of a hermit. So the first-person "I" of earlier eighteenth-century novels, possibly an editor or translator outside the story, here takes up that external first-person perspective within the story itself. And whereas Montesquieu's Persians, Marivaux's Marianne, and Rousseau's characters in *La Nouvelle Heloïse* tell their story in first-person epistolary or memoir discourse, the first-person narrator's role in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel is clearly relegated to an exclusively external perspective where it is undermined by other priorities.

An assertion of the "I" point of view would be disruptive, would make too much of an exception in a narrative attempting to create a tableau of domestic unity. First- person discourse is thus limited to conversations among the four major characters, conversations with each other. We can listen in on these conversations in the novel as the members of this family recount their sentiments and thoughts to one another. But this kind of interrelation takes place most frequently in third person-narration. In effect, the mention of Virginie in this novel takes place most often in a context in which Paul is invoked and vice versa. Mention of either one of the children or of the mothers always immediately contextualizes that person in relation to at least one of the three others and often to all four. Such interrelations of one person with another take place without necessarily using the labels of "mother", "daughter", "son", etc., but function throughout just like the familial labels that by definition always invoke more than one family member. "Mother", for instance, is a relational term since it signifies more than a woman in a particular role. The term "mother" always of necessity implies the child; "brother" necessarily invokes a sibling, etc. The first part of the novel that sets up such a family community weaves a domestic intimacy out of just such continued criss-crossing references. To tell a story as "I" has become too lonely, too disconnected from the domestic picture.

This is precisely the dilemma of Mistress Henley in the novel *Lettres de Mistress Henley publiées par une amie*, written at the end of the century in 1784 at about the same time as *Paul et Virginie*[41]. In Isabelle de Charrière's celebrated novel, a woman recounts her personal story in first-person letters written to a friend. The subject of these letters and of her emotional turmoil involves the very question of whether she can, whether she wants to, integrate herself as wife and mother into the family into which she has recently married. The narrator recounts her life story and present difficulties to a friend – it could have been to her diary, to the reader, but to no one with whom she lives her life. Mistress Henley is most unhappy as this outlying "I" who can not find her own individual place within the family. Letters provide her a place where she can give vent to her personal sentiments and thus where she defines an individual if isolated identity. This text is indeed an excellent example in epistolary fiction of the ability of the letter writer to "render an account of one's own present situation" (Montesquieu, *Lettres Persanes*, "Préface,"cited above). And clearly in this novel, letters have themselves become the only place for her to achieve such self expression and definition.

Written laments to a friend about her unhappiness focus on the ways she has been expected to assimilate into the household of her husband, his daughter from a previous and now deceased wife, and his servants. The desire to become part of this family is from the outset mitigated by frustration at not being able to lay claim to a domestic role that allows her an identity of her own. And with these failures of successful integration comes a contrasting desire not to fit into the family structure that would incorporate her entirely or, it seems, not at all. Her letters constitute an outpost where such conflicting sentiments can be articulated, where the desire to be appreciated is accompanied by resistance to her husband and the family group which would assimilate and appropriate her.

Mistress Henley tells throughout her letters of countless episodes in which her reserved, highly rational and rather dismissive though kind husband does not understand nor appreciate her sentiments, her character, her ideas. These conflicting aims of assimilating into versus existing outside

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41 Isabelle de Charrière, *Lettres de Mistress Henley publiées par son amie,* ed. Joan Hinde Stewart and Philip Stewart (New York: MLA Publications, 1993). Translation of this text will be from the English edition: *Letters of Mistress Henley published by her friend,* Trans. Philip Stewart and Jean Vaché (New York: MLA, 1993)

the family structure continues throughout five of the six letters. Yet in the novel's last letter, Mistress Henley announces the end of this special kind of correspondence. "Après celle-ci [letter] je n'en veux plus écrire du même genre"[42]. The epistolary "I" remains separate and separately defined, which is, of course, the very problem. For the continuation of this personalized subject perspective in writing acts as an impediment to the assimilation of Mistress Henley into domestic life. Seen from the exigencies of the family picture, Mistress Henley understands the necessity precisely of renouncing her first-person perspective in favor of joining for better and for worse the greater domestic entity.

The shift to a more integrated family role is prepared, indeed, already performed, in the sentence that describes what will now transpire: "Un billet vous apprendra de loin en loin que *votre amie* vit encore jusqu'à ce qu'elle ne vive plus (my emphasis)[43]. This is Mistress Henley's announcement that she will from now on assimilate, fade, into the family unit. In the reference to herself now as "votre amie" ["your friend"], she has already become a third-person, "amie." And though we never do get a family picture, the integration of Mistress Henley into the domestic scene takes place definitively through this repudiation of a first-person writing "I". This first-person narrative is being subsumed under a new kind of relationship to the domestic community.

Mistress Henley intends to fit into her name, her surname, her husband's family name, which is tellingly the only proper name used throughout. On such a note of renunciation, the novel ends. "Dans un an, dans deux ans, vous apprendrez, je l'espère, que je suis raisonnable et heureuse, ou que je ne suis plus"[44]. Either she survives as part of the picture she will now join, or she will no longer exist. This allusion to her possible real death includes a somewhat happier alternative; yet in either case, whether she dies a literal death or whether the death is that of her individuated perspective, Mistress Henley ceases to exist as the "I" of her letters.

The nineteenth century tended to move away from use of first-person perspective. For various reasons, a shift takes place to a third-person narrative voice in most novels, from Georges Sand to Balzac, Stendhal, Flaubert, Hugo, Zola, etc. One possible reason for this shift becomes apparent at the end of the eighteenth century in such a seminal novel as that of Bernardin de Saint Pierre in which the first-person point of view is relegated through a displacement to the margins as a spectator of the domestic picture; or in a related scenario, as in the case of Mistress Henley, the story involves precisely the drama of renouncing a first-person perspective in favor of a domestic unit. In both these eighteenth-century novels, a first-person narrator assumes a transitional role, one in the process of shifting into a third-person narrator.

The emphasis everywhere apparent in the text of *Paul et Virginie* on pictures of domestic intimacy is thus projected onto narrative perspective and descriptive strategies of spatial as well as temporal distancing and proximity. From the first pages of the novel, descriptions of nature play a considerable role in this formation of family pictures. As mentioned earlier, the exotic Indian ocean and the mountains, wind, and forests of the Ile de France form natural barriers that enclose these intimate households. But trees, clearings, even bird nests participate in lending shape to spaces that inform and replicate the maternal and sibling enclosures of intimacy. Nature in this novel is introduced as wild and virgin in pointed contrast to European formalized cultivation at the same time that nature operates as the domesticated and domesticating frames of the family picture[45]. We are told, for

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[42] *Lettres de Mistriss Henley, 38* ["After this one, I do not wish to write any more [letters] in this style", 36].

[43] *Lettres de Mistress Henley,* 38 ["A note will inform you from time to time that *your friend* still lives until she no longer does", 36 (my emphasis)].

[44] *Lettres de Mistress Henley,* 45 ["In a year, in two years, you will learn, I trust, that I am reasonable and contented, or that I am no longer", 42].

[45] See Michel Racault's excellent essay ("Système de la toponymie et organization de l'espace Romanesque dans *Paul et Virginie", SVEC*, 242 [1986]: 377-415), which centers on a study of names of places, particularly proper names given by the characters throughout the novel. Racault points out the named open and closed spaces that dominate and that create spatial distances on the one hand and close intimate spaces on the other (387); he doesn't, however, relate the production of both these kinds of spaces to the intimacy of family pictures.

instance, that Paul upon reaching adolescence learned to cultivate their land, their "vaste enclos" that he transformed into an "amphithéâtre de verdure", but without straying from nature's order: "Mais en assujettissant ces végétaux à son plan, il ne s'était pas écarté de celui de la nature"[46]... What is this nature that is identical to its domesticated and artful cultivation?

Such domestication is visible, moreover, in the names with which this community endows each site in nature where they shared some regular activity. In their "vast enclosure", or "bassin", "Rien n'était plus agréable que les noms donnés à la plupart des retraites charmantes de ce labyrinthe"[47]. A particular rock, or clearing, "un cercle d'orangers, de bananiers et de jameroses plantés autour d'une pelouse, au milieu duquel Virginie et Paul allaient quelquefois danser se nommait LA CONCORDE"[48]. The most prized site is endowed with a name: "Mais de tout ce que renfermait cette enceinte rien n'était plus agréable que ce qu'on appelait LE REPOS DE VIRGINIE"[49]. And within these special enclosures – clearing, circle, lawn – situated already within the "enceinte" of their land, situated within the larger enclosure of the island, two fruits, cocoanuts, gifts to Paul and Virginia, were planted and soon grew into trees, trees which like the persons of this intimate world, "Déjà [ils] entrelaçaient leurs palmes"[50]... The ultimate proximity and intimacy between the mothers, between mothers and their children and their servants, between brother and sister is framed again by the tableaux of nature that accompany this text both in the multiple verbal descriptions as well as in the proliferation of illustrations, of actual pictures that frame the family from the very early editions of this novel.

It is thus not surprising that just about every edition of *Paul et Virginie* has been accompanied by pictorial illustrations[51]. Says Jean Adhémar of these illustrations: "Les illustrateurs, donc attirés comme le public par cet exotisme et ces vives couleurs, ont bien souvent su rendre le ton du roman; leurs images, plus encore que le texte, ont nourri les imaginations au xix ième siècle..."[52]. Whether these illustrations capture the tone of the novel better than the text itself is a moot question. As can be seen in the illustrations unfortunately not included here, these graphic depictions constitute an additional domestic frame in that they reinforce, duplicate the already pictorial moments of domestic intimacy captured, frozen in time in the narrative . Within these pictures, the profusion of nature's flora functions consistently to frame the picture of intimacy. With the exception of its first appearance as part of the third edition of Bernardin Saint-Pierre's *Etudes de la Nature* in 1788, the novel has included engravings, which often like the luxurious Curmer edition of 1838 were carefully supervised by the author himself[53].

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46 *Paul et Virginie,* 193 ["vast enclosure"]; ["amphitheater of vegetation"]; ["But in subjecting this vegetation to his plan, he hadn't strayed from that of nature"].

47 *Paul et Virginie,* 194 ["Nothing was more agreeable than the names given to most of the charming retreats in this labyrinth"].

48 *Paul et Virginie,* 196 ["A circle of orange and banana trees and wild roses planted around a lawn, in the middle of which Virginia and Paul went sometimes to dance was named HARMONY" (author's emphasis)].

49 *Paul et Virginie,* 196-197 ["But of everything this enclosure encircled, nothing was more agreeable than what was called VIRGINIE'S HAVEN" (author's emphasis)].

50 *Paul et Virginie,* 197 ["Already [they] intertwined their fronds"].

51 Toinet, Paul et Virginie: Répertoire bibliograhique et iconographique, 3.

52 As cited in Toinet, *Paul et Virginie: Répertoire bibliographique et iconographique*, 134 ["The illustrators, thus attracted as was the public by this exoticism and bright color, often knew how to render the tone of the novel; their images even more than the text, nourished the imagination of the nineteenth century" (my translation). The edition of 1789, which is the first edition of *Paul et Virginie* standing alone, is also the first illustrated edition done by Moreau le Jeune and J. Vernet. The first suite of illustrations separate from the book were done by Shall, in 1791 (Toinet, 135-136).

53 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie,* Paris: L. Curmer, 1838, 1938, BN (Y2 758, Y2 186, etc.). A "Table des noms des dessinateurs et des gravures" lists 315 drawings and engravings in this edition. The most interesting and commonly used illustrations are typically taken from the 1838 Curmer edition. A more accessible edition of *Paul et Virginie,* Préface, commentaire de Jacques Van Den Heuvel [Paris: Le Livre de poche, 1984] and based on the Curmer edition includes several though far from all of the prints from the Curmer edition.

Genre scenes, images of common domestic life, are dominant in these illustrations[54]. These scenes tend to show the children Paul and Virginie enfolded in each others' arms in the enclosures of cradle, bath, and in the arms of their mothers; in most all these illustrations, the children are also held within the frames of a highly stylized and exotic flora and fauna. These floral borders that edge the illustrations seem to hold these families within their embrace. For the principal characteristic of this pictorial nature is the climbing, the intertwining of branches, flowers and vines that not only frame the scene but also grow into the picture where they function visually to interlace, to entwine, one person or group, one cabin, with another. This is a nature both domestic and wild in its intertwining that at moments breaks into the frame and invades the pictures.

Thus the island, while often the scene of utopic experiment in the eighteenth century as in the *Ile des esclaves* of Marivaux or much earlier in the model *Utopia* of Thomas Moore, plays here a different and in a way more significant role in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's novel. The spatial enclosure of the island that provides protection and distance from the conventions of European society while similar to other utopias has a particular resonance within this text. The island replicates itself and is replicated ad infinitum throughout the novel in its capacity of spatial, physical and sentimental closure and enclosure that shapes the text into its myriad pictures of domestic intimacy.

In this *mise en abîme,* this imbrication of frames and enclosures that holds the world still, any event that erupts into such pictures is bound to be catastrophic. The violent storm and ship that breaks up on the rocky shores of the island bring a tragic end to this family. Yet, the choice of a shipwreck defines not just the climactic event of the story; it defines the nature of event itself as being catastrophic to the intimacy, to the stability and immobility of these domestic pictures. The ship comes from afar, from Europe, and constitutes the liaison with the world that this other world is protecting against. As the ship crashes into the island reef, it crashes into that world, disrupting it forever.

The death of each one of the family members after the shipwreck taking the life of Virginie is consecrated in the tombs that are often represented in illustrations accompanying the text:

> On a mis auprès de Virginie, aux pieds des mêmes roseaux, son ami Paul, et autour d'eux leurs tendres mères et leurs fidèles serviteurs. On n'a point élevé de marbres sur leurs humbles tertres, ni gravé d'inscriptions à leurs vertus; mais leur mémoire est restée ineffaçable dans le cœur de ceux qu'ils ont obligés[55].

The term "tertre" with reference to a funereal site denotes simply "une elevation de terre recouvrant une sepulture"[56]. In other words, no grave stone was erected according to the text to identify the family members. Yet in the illustrations for several editions, including that of 1806 and the Curmer edition of 1838, we see rectangular if blank stones leaning against the mounds of earth that hold the family sepultures. The tomb stones that frame nothing but their own stasis, their own stillness, are lying within a sheltering forest glade and framed as well as attached to each other by the vines and tropical abundance that proliferate in all the illustrations. The stasis of death resembles the repetition of their daily domestic intimacy in life created in pictures of this calm immobile society in which nothing happens. The tombs that are represented in text and in illustration occupy the same

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54 See Richard Rand, "Love, Domesticity, and the Evolution of Genre Painting in Eighteenth-Century France", *Intimate Encounters: Love and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century France,* (Hanover, NH: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College; Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1997), 4. "The increasingly narrow meaning of the term was in large measure a response to the new seriousness with which scenes of everyday life were regarded in the second half of the century". According to Rand, the growing importance of the term "scenes of life" distinguished genre from landscape and still life. "In 1791, Quatremère de Quincy would define genre painting as a 'scene of common or domestic life'".

55 *Paul et Virginie,* 309 ["Next to Virginie, at the foot of the same reeds, her friend Paul was placed, and around them their tender mothers and their faithful servants. No marble was raised on their humble graves, neither were inscriptions on their virtue engraved there; but their memory has remained indelible in the hearts of those they helped"].

56 *Le Petit Robert* ["elevation of earth covering a grave" (my translation)].

position as previously these family members occupied in life, residing each one next to the other, and now without any event able to interrupt, to intrude on, this ultimate enclosure.

Death is familiar to the photograph. It is, as Barthes says, a witness to "ce qui a été", to the "what has been"[57]. Indeed, photography brings back, re-presents each time one looks, what is now no longer: "cette chose un peu terrible qu'il y a dans toute photographie: le retour du mort"[58]. In *Paul et Virginie,* the reader looks at each tableau, each family picture that repeats what is missing – a domestic intimacy that is already no more – and yet in terms of a social and historical referent, which perhaps has not yet been. The tableaux both written and pictorial in this novel give evidence of an intimacy situated in an exotic world that evokes, that introduces a new private domestic sphere. Before the age of photography, yet already *foreshadowing* this very modern age, before the "explosion of the private into the public" the reality of domestic intimacy emerges in the bounded shape of tableaux that must of necessity be framed by the outsider, the viewer, the reading public[59].

57 Barthes, *La Chambre Claire*, 97; *Camera Lucida* ["what has been"] trans. Howard, 85.

58 Barthes, *La Chambre Claire*, 9; *Camera Lucida* ["this rather terrible thing in all photography: the return of the dead"] trans. Howard, 23.

59 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 98, trans. Howard.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 27-31

Self, poetry, psychoanalysis

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Modern poetry was probably born in the late 17th Century when lyrical poetry was created as a special discourse, not only as a subjective discourse, but as the subject in discourse. Modernity in this sense is nothing else but the autonomous articulation of the internal, of the individual *Innerlichkeit*. This revolutionary phase was the period of Romanticism in culture and literature and the age of early romantic philosophy of the Schlegels, Schelling, Hegel and others. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy in an excellent book[1] about these developments called this new literary form, the lyrical poetry the "literary absolute". "Das Hertz ist der Schlüssel der Welt un des Lebens" – said Novalis[2]. From this time on the autonomous, self-reflexive individual acquired a central existential position, the person who earlier carried the imprint of the age on himself, tried to put his own print now on the world. Poetry was absolutely important in this change, it was the leading genre of the age, as it served as the discourse per se of the internal core of the subject. In ever so many cases from Goethe to Coleridge and later in the 19th Century the central question was, how the essence of this autonomous subjectivity could be defined. The new philosophy built on the primacy of individuality tried to determine the core, the essence of subjectivity and explain how this core could be expressed. Charles Taylor, in an excellent book titled *The Sources of Self* labeled this change in culture as an "expressivist turn", in which the "inner voice" was "made manifest in a given medium" while making manifest "does not imply that what is so revealed was fully formulated beforehand"[3]. A sense of creative inner depth was born and this "sense of depth in inner space is bound up with the sense that we can move into it and bring things to the fore"[4]. Modern lyrical poetry also created the form, the medium that could express this inner, powerful essence through the idea and technique of the symbol: "the symbol, unlike the allegory, provides the form of language in which something otherwise beyond our reach can become visible"[5]. The history of poetry, the series of its major types can easily be read as the different and possibly deeper and deeper articulations of the inner, creative essence of individuality, of self.

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1 Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe – Jean-Luc Nancy: *The Literary Absolute – The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism.* New York, 1988, State University of New York Press.

2 Qutoed by Charles Taylor: *Sources of the Self.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989. p. 371.

3 Ibid., p. 374.

4 Ibid., p. 390.

5 Ibid., p. 379

In an important sense psychoanalysis can be understood as a parallel systematic-conceptual representative of this general cultural change. The different models of self, the hidden layers of individuality revealed and named in the process of therapy, the articulations of different metapsychological systems all serve to express this inner voice. Is it possible than, to use some major ideas of psychoanalysis, to describe the changes that poetry went through in its changing discourses from and after its romantic birth? Can different phases of the history of modern poetry described as presenting different self-constructs described later by psychoanalysis? I am not able to argue it properly, but my hypothesis is that early modern lyrical poetry (romanticism, symbolism) used an Oedipal self-construct as its basic building block while the late modern objective poetry tried to reach down to a deeper layer of inwardness, tried to define, express the pre-oedipal components of the subject. To present this process I would like interpret one single poem, a kind "metapsychological poem" the theme of which is just this possibility to reach this even more hidden, often non-linguistic layer of identity.

My poetic example is a late modern Hungarian poet, Attila József[6]. He was born in 1905 and committed suicide by throwing himself before the train in 1937. When he established himself in poetry, Hungarian poets were under the influence of the late, more refined mentality of symbolism facing the relativity of the self. The characteristic features of this trend can be traced in Attila József's early poetry, where his personal experiences are expressed in complicated, figurative-surrealistic images. Very early, from 1925 on, he disintegrates the inner order of symbolism; instead of pure aesthetic experience he claims political commitment; he abandons the figurative idiomatic world of poems for a metonymy building on the chain of neighbouring words, on stringing the fragments of the world. The montage of a fragmented world, the technique of the avant-garde is an important school, though not the ultimate goal of poetic development. About 1930, under the influence of Marxism and psychoanalysis, he began searching for an order which shows the homologous relation of soul and object, and perceives the poem as a correlation of the inner and outer world. It is then that he wrote his long poems fathoming the depth of real being, and these are, both in their technique and poetic vision, exactly like T. S. Eliot' *The Waste Land*. In these poems the world of the outskirts is used to give body and form to the poet's inner experience. *A Winter Night*, for example, exposes a monumental tableau of alienated modern being, the disappearance of intimacy and private feelings, the revelation of the exact structure of objecthood, and shows that all these can be unified in a poem and explained through the allegory of a political idea providing an interpretation of the world. The climax of his poetry is, perhaps, the poem entitled *Consciousness* which, besides revealing the structure of the objecthood of the world, speaks about this structure seeming so absolute and reliable only due to our self-deceiving belief, because "the fabric of the law / always had a missing stitch, a flaw".

The specialty of his poetic turn compared to Eliot's route was that he started from a radical rewriting of the nature of self, of his own self, his identity in an impersonal, objective way. And only as the next step he tried fill in, mirror this very new self-concept with a poetic world that could present, explain this personal core. Imagine an Eliot who would identify completely with Prufrock, and all his later works, would be written by this Prufrock figure. I would like to show through an interpretation of one single poem that in it an invisible inner construct is presented, a kind of screen that opens up an underlying structure of self, hidden as a heterogeneous layer behind the verbally available Oedipal self.

The poem was written in 1925, close to the twentieth birthday of the poet, it is short and seemingly simple:

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6 His poetry was extensively translated into English. Edwin Morgan – major contemporary Scottish poet – translated 60 poems (Attila József: *sixty Poems,* Glasgow: Mariscat Press, 2001). Some other collections: A Transparent Lion – Selected Poems of Attila József, Kobenhavn/Los Angeles: Green Integer; *Perched on Nothing's Branch – Selected Poetry of Attila József*. Translated by Peter Hargitai, Apalachee Press, 1986.

With pure heart

1. Got no father, got no mother,
2. no god, no homeland,
3. no cradle, no shroud
4. no kiss, no lover.

5. Last three days I haven't eaten
6. neither a lot, nor a morsel,
7. my twenty years is power,
8. I am looking for a buyer.

9. If no one wants it,
10. the devil will take it,
11. with a pure heart I will plunder,
12. if need be I will murder.

13. I'll be caught, I'll be gallowed,
14. with blessed earth I'll be covered,
15. & death spreading grass will grow,
16. on my oh, so beautiful heart.

(Tr. by M. Castro & Gábor Gyukics)

The primary constructing principle of the poem is the three time repetition of the figure "heart": in the title, at around the two-thirds of the text and as the last, with closing word of the poem. The pure and beautiful heart can be read as the *metaphor* of a new personal existence. This *metaphoricality* is one of the two important and consequently used formal differences used in the poem. The other is that the declaration that "I exist with pure heart" is the *only affirmative* statement of the poem, while everything else is given in the *negative*, as refused. It seems as if two different but inseparable self-constructs are available, the non-detailed, general, purely stated fact of the (idea of the) heart and, on the other side, the detailed, structured, negated reality of the person. I return to the "heart" motive in a moment, let's see first the enclosed longer, negative and non-metaphorical text of the poem.

The reality of the self is presented in two steps that are separated by the repetition of the heart motive. The *first*, longer part (line 1-10) presents the existential *structure* of personal reality, the *second* an existential *narrative* of the person (line 11-16). Both of these parts, this longer text of the poem completely lacks metaphoricality and built on a very different rhetorical technique, on metonymy. Metonymical images are built on syntagmatic relation, they do not refer to a symbolic depth (to a hidden sense) but use a kind of surface relation of neighboring phenomena, an often visible connection of the objective world (adjacency, part-whole relation). In rhetoric the metonymical relation that is extended to a longer chain, to a temporary sequence is called *metalepsis*[7].

The first ten lines contain a very strict binary structuring, the first four lines as the first unit, the second four with different structuring is the next part, and two additional lines that lead to the next longer part. The text of the poem is extremely, I would say: purely, nearly mechanically structured, constructed, it is like a machine of signifiers.

In each of the first four lines there are two, altogether eight denied metonymies of the personal fate:

Got no father, got no mother,
no god, no homeland,

no cradle, no shroud
no kiss, no lover.

7 Genette, Gérard: *Métalepse. De figure à la fiction*. Éditions de Seuil, Paris, 2004.

The father is the metonymical figure of order, while the mother accepts, offers love. The same is repeated in the next line on a more transcendental level: God is the transcendental principle of orderliness, the homeland is the collective world that accepts. The third line refers to the binary structure of a certain, socially defined birth (what kind, what quality of cradle one gets) and through the quality of the shroud the collective acceptance of the deceased. The fourth line describes the love that the speaker offers and through the kiss, the love he gets. The four metonymical pairs suggest the total Oedipal construct of the person, that places us into a certain life and allows to define the character of its beginning and the end too.

The next four lines continue the refusal of the Oedipal rhetoric further on in the form of two plus two lines.

Last three days I haven't eaten
neither a lot, nor a morsel,
my twenty years is power,
I am looking for a buyer.

If no one wants it,
the devil will take it,

While the first four lines of the poem referred to a kind of *spatial structure*, a kind of inner-social state of the person, this part suggest some *temporariness* and activity. The sixth and seventh lines define a time sequence that comes up to the present, while the second half of the strophe starts from the present heading toward the future event. The "last three days" can easily be associated with the three days of Eastern fasting at the end of which a renewed person was born as the resurrection happened. This part is also motherly as it is connected with eating. The eighth and ninth lines are about "power", the life-power, the accumulated libido of the speaker, it is a fatherly, phallic component of the Oedipal self. The poet was exactly twenty years old in the time of the writing of the poem, and selling his inner power means the act of transforming his own self into something fetishistic, something that appears in the form of money. The buyer is, however, the devil, he is the "spirit of negation" who is opposed to God, who was the positive "buyer" of the offer of Jesus on the cross.

The repetition of the motive of "pure heart" separates the first and second part of the poem, and this second one contains a narrative, again negative in each of its components.

with a pure heart I will plunder,
if need be I will murder.

I'll be caught, I'll be gallowed,
with blessed earth I'll be covered,

As the first step the speaker breaks in a space of other people and – second – breaks in a personal existence, as he kills somebody. The next two steps are reactions of the outside world, the destruction of the person: he is caught and hanged. The end is clearly phallic, the hanged body becomes stiff and erect. In this part the last Oedipal component, the body itself is refused, it is detached from the heart, the personal core.

I have mentioned but have not discussed an important feature of these ten lines: every component, act, phenomena are in the negative in it, the most frequent words are the "no" "neither", and the narrative is built of destructive acts only. Negation must have a crucial role in building this levele of personal core. Freud in a short 1925 paper titled *Negation* suggested that the negation of statements about the outside world is different from those that negate an inner experience as this type of negation often refers to inner contents that cannot be said, expressed, and the function of negation is a non-referential referring to these. Kristeva in her analysis of negation wrote that rejection "suggests the heterogeneity of significance (...) it opens up an a-signifying, indeed pre-linguistic

crucible"[8]. She also suggests that "negativity is the liqudifying and dissolving agent that does not destroy but rather reactivates new organizations and, in that sense, affirms"[9]. In this poem too, negation is partly a refusal of a certain, Oedipal personal construct but it is also a reference to through rejection of an unknown, unsayable deeper layer of personal identity, it "reveals itself as a screen over an emptiness"[10] but over a very rich, saturated emptiness. Negation is a part, a component of dream-work, a strange interplay of the invisible visibility. Of course it always initiates the question: if it is not, than what?

Now we may turn to the all embracing personal essence, the heart. At the end of the poem in the last two lines, the residue of this inner reduction, the leftover essence is the heart that is changed from "pure" into "beautiful heart". The term "pure" in this position does not mean moral purity, nor some naivity but the term is used in the same position as it was used by Immanuel Kant in the "Critique of Pure Reason". Kant's aim was to reach the absolute, the absolutely non-empirical essence of thinking. The "beautiful heart" term suggests a change from the epistemological position into an aesthetic one again in the Kantian sense, the stainless, spotless inner essence.

The poet, the late modern poet would like to break through the early modern in a basic sense "empirical", Oedipal self-construct, and reach the "critique of pure This", the sense arrived at in this moment becomes empty, the "heart", is pure, and beautiful, but radically empty, a sense-less sense.

To summarize my interpretation: *With Pure Heart* is a "self-theoretical" poem, that tries to present that crucial change in poetic vision that lead from the earlier, sense centered, symbolical-metaphorical poetic discourse into a new one that is built on the idea of inner structure, the reaching down into the level of primary identity. It is important to note, however, that with the constant negation, through the negated components and relations of a personal structure we, the readers are required to project a kind of screen, a feeling of an empty but unforgettable relation, we are drawn into a dream-work that suggests a more basic, worldless construct in the background of the person. This pre-linguistic structuring can probably called the feeling, the activity of the primary narcissistic identity level of the person.

It would be interesting to follow the next possible steps of the poet after the projection of this purely energetic, unsayable, negative core. It is not possible to stop here, and it is not possible to give the proper meaning, metaphorical sense of the "heart" (as Freud offered at a point the meaning of the Irma dream). In the search for a sense the "navel point" appears in the case of the person too: the navel is not a lack, but an unavoidable heterogeneity, the gap between language and non-lingiuistic personal energy construct. This primary identity, however, never ceases to facilitate the person, it needs to interpreted, picked up, used in life.

In the following years, the poet Attila József developed several techniques that tried a metonymical mirroring of this unsayable original gap. He wrote several poems about his own name. Our proper name is a metonymical figuration as it was attached to us, given to us without referring to our essence; it has never been connected to our personal (Oedipal) sense. Another poetic possibility was the analysis of love and in it the mirroring function of the other (metonymically placed) person as a specular projection of the wordless personal identity. A third group of the gap-filling primary narcissistic identity poems are about a special image of God, a loved and loving grandfather like figure, a kind of pre-oedipal father.

Several other poems and more detailed analysis would be needed to explain properly my hypothesis. I hope, however, that even in the case of this short poem a possibly typical late modern attitude to self could be shown. This metonymical, objective self became the starting point of a late modern poetic world view.

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8 Kristeva, Julia: *Revolution in Poetic Language*. Translated by Margaret Waller. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, p. 147.

9 Ibid., p. 109.

10 Kristeva, Julia: *Tales of Love*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez, New York: Columbia University Press, 1987, p. 23.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 33-36

Mourning and creativity in Traveling with the Dead, a book of poems

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> John Bowlby writes that conditions required for healthy mourning in a young child are:
>
> first, that he should have enjoyed a reasonably secure relationship with his parents prior to the loss; secondly, he be given prompt and accurate information about what has happened, be allowed to ask all sorts of questions and have them answered as honestly as possible, and be participant in family grieving including whatever funeral rites are decided on; and, thirdly, that he has the comforting presence of the surviving parent, or if that is not possible, of a known and trusted substitute, and an assurance that the relationship will continue (Bowlby, vol. 3, p. 276).

When I read this I was astonished at how clearly he stated conditions that were not met after the death of my parents when I was four. Furthermore, how my poems picked up on these needs in my own mourning or lack of mourning experience. In fact, the very words he uses, that parents often say, "As a stopgap a child may be told that father has gone on a trip" (vol. 3 270) appear in my work. In my poem "Dark Holes" I write, "It was my brother, not any of the grownups, who told me our parents had not gone on a long trip; they were dead" (TWD, 47).

The two things a child needs to know when a relative dies, Bowlby states, are that the dead parent will never return and that his body is buried in the ground or burned to ashes (271). Becker and Margolin (1967) describe a family where the children visit the cemetery, place flowers on the grave, watch relatives cry, without anyone mentioning their mother's death or funeral. This applies to my own case except I was not taken to either of my parents' funerals and did not visit the cemetery to see their graves until I was older. By that time I had figured out they had died. Missing this requisite information, poems such as "Dream of Mrs. Roosevelt" reenact the missing funeral and cemetery visits. The speaker descends into a mine and "like a blind woman/feeling the pit walls with my hands" encounters her dead parents who are "standing in the D.C. cold, drinking in/FDR's words like bathtub gin" (TWD, 13) Her descent into the mine is a going down into Hades to find her parents shades. The poem goes on to introduce others who have died "yellow stars, sewn onto their jackets" and incorporates familial loss with the Holocaust losses, broadening mourning to a wider context. This poem therefore can be considered a step toward maturity, moving from the perspective of the child left in ignorance of death to the adult who now faces its reality.

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Other poems are written entirely from the young child's perspective. In them I assume the consciousness of my brother and me, growing up with our aunt. In addressing a child's idea of death, Bowlby notes, "Very young children meet with examples of death, a dead mouse, a dead bird... what has happened? Is the creature asleep?" He suggests that from adults' explanations, the child develops his own ideas about death. With the loss of both of my parents, and with no explanation for their absence, the death of animals becomes part of a mourning process transferred from the missing unknown and unknowable parents onto other creatures.

This happens in "The Bird Funeral" as my brother and I perform funeral rites and bury a dead sparrow. The poem incorporates anger over the loss of loved ones, directed toward an inadequate mother substitute, by using the aunt's handkerchief to bury the bird and forcing the hated cousin, who still has a mother, to participate in the funeral rite:

> "Carrying the dead sparrow/in our aunt's lace handkerchief/we let cousin play gravedigger, wanting to make her a mourner/like us" (TWD, 21). In reference to the need for a trusted parent substitute, the poem "Keeper" clearly indicates the lack of a nurturing relation with my aunt that followed my parents' death in the lines, "I could have put you with the orphans/in St. Mary's, my aunt said" and continues to describe her lack of empathy, "At bedtime, inspecting my neck and ears/Her long Tomato Red nails scraped my skin./I asked her what it feels like to die. Lights off, she said (TWD, 22).

A question often asked me is if I remember my parents. The work of Piaget suggests a child is not capable of recalling and using his representational model of the world before the middle of the second year (429). Fagan (1973) presents evidence that an infant of five months shown the photo of a face for two minutes can recognize her when shown the photo two weeks later. Mahler observes (1966) it is only when a child is able to sustain short separations that we can credit him with the capacity to evoke mental representations of the missing mother. Bowlby concludes a child's capacity to recall his mother would be developing months in advance of his capacity to recall anyone else. This is because she has far greater emotional salience through sight, sound, smell and touch than anyone else (431) Therefore, he thinks that, in mourning, children retain an image of the absent mother and become attached to a new figure only gradually (437). None of these theorists address the absent father, regarding him as a source of fear to the young child. Margaret Mahler, however, has pointed out that girls without fathers tend to idealize them (1961).

How do I apply these clinical observations to my own case when I have few memories of my father who died at thirty-four in a car crash or my mother, who died at thirty-one of rheumatic fever five months later? Without such memories I invent my parents from objects I inherited: a baby grand Chickering piano. Black Knight Bavarian china. Hotel Conaught labels on a steamer trunk, my father's yellow convertible. I idealize them by using movies and movie stars to represent them; Rita Hayworth, Esther Williams, George Brent and Bette Davis in *Dark Victory* and perfumes like Arpege to create the smell and touch of the missing mother figure that Bowlby says is so important for recalling her.

These objects are prominent in the poems "Keeper", "Dolls", "Before the Camera", "Mother's Gown", "Petit Elegy", "Souvenir", but variations on the need to discover who the poet's parents really were, through their possessions, find their way into poems throughout the book. For example, in "Winter Palace," St. Petersburg," the speaker, while viewing the czar's family heirlooms, laments the lack of valued possessions that might lead her to know what her parents' marriage was like.

While my paper deals primarily with mourning, the issue of separation anxiety must also be addressed. Melanie Klein (1948b) believes that objective anxiety arises from "the child's complete dependence on the mother for the satisfaction of his needs." She thinks that anxiety and unconscious aggression often co-exist. Freud, in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, connects anxiety to the danger of losing the love-object. Therese Benedek, more recently, describes response to separations and bereavements during wartime as a trauma and concludes that "The universal response to separation is anxiety" Benedek, 1946:146).

To make the connection between my poems and theories of separation as inducing anxiety in which grief and mourning are present, I see creating them as a struggle to overcome the anxiety of the early deprivation of mothering and fathering. A difficult and possibly impossible task for a very young child who lacks the cognitive skills such as language, according to Piaget, in adulthood, through language, mourning can take place. The poems as artifacts are objects connecting a bereaved child to the lost parents. Aggression against a not-good-enough caretaker can now be expressed in words impossible to utter while growing up for fear of punishment which might lead to abandonment. Through re-creation of the lost parents, the child I was can be consoled.

Ultimately, however, a poem is not therapy, but art. As an artist I have felt free to fictionalize my parents from the few facts left to me. When I gave *Traveling with the Dead* to my brother, somewhat hesitantly for fear of how he might respond to the family portraits, including his, I told him to think of the poems as fiction. He responded by saying that the fiction amazed him but there was enough truth to hurt. Was my father a bootlegger? Yes. Was he Boss of the New Jersey Mob? No, but rather one of three partners. Did he sleep with a gun under his pillow? I don't know.

Through word choice, imagery, form, and a sense of history, the distance provided by artistic creation can be imposed on real losses to ease their pain. By placing my parents in the cultural context of Prohibition, using writers such as Isaac Babel and Marina Tsvetayeva as their stand-ins, political figures such as Mrs. Roosevelt to see them as living in a wider world, having my mother and father appear in places they may or may not have been to – London, St. Petersburg, Dublin and other locales – the mourning which I was unable to do as a child takes place. Fantasy and idealization mitigate anxiety at their absence.

But as poet, not as the child I was, I exaggerate, invent and embellish. Often formal verse, as in the poem "Romance," a villanelle, serves to constrain grief and to allow levity. In "Romance" the villanelle's repeated lines "Each year my father grows dimmer" and "leaving hardly a glimmer" achieves a kind of jauntiness at odds with the father's disappearance. We may or may not believe the poet when she says her father's memory is fading or even the line "Thank God that hurt is over." What I can say is that form and irony as in this poem can function defensively to keep the hurt at bay.

In demonstrating how the act of writing and putting a book of poems together as an aesthetic object to be read, held, and shown to others, can merge mourning and creativity, I'd like to talk about the cover. Selecting a photo of my parents in Sloppy Joe's, Havana, Cuba, circa 1935 that stood on our Chickering piano throughout my childhood, for the book jacket encompasses the grief, memory, and pleasure I received in the writing and publishing of *Traveling with the Dead*. The photograph, a daily reminder to me as a child that they had actually existed, was for me the most important artifact of their lives. The poem "Souvenir" describes and embellishes the photograph's setting. Here is the poem in its entirety:

Forever frozen
in Sloppy Joe's Havana,
my parents sip Cuba Libres.
Black hair pomaded and parted
in the middle, my father in white slacks,
navy-blue double breasted blazer
blows smoke clouds with his cigar.
Beside him my mother,
mink wrap around her shoulders,
a velvet cloche hiding
her profile,
stares into the future
that never comes.
In the background,
a man caught by the camera

hunches over the bar,
ice cubes melting in his drink.
I invent him
as go-between
for the gambling syndicate
and the Bureau of Internal Revenue,
my father as *el jefe*,
while my mother spills
her velvet words
from the frame. (TWD) 37

Lines from another poem "Exeunt" can be seen as a commentary on "Souvenir," summing up how through art, the lost can be regained. It takes place in Oxford where, appropriately for this essay, I was visiting while studying in a seminar on Freud's work:

Now in Oxford I find my way on strange streets –
Catte, St. Giles, Magdalen – hurrying along
university gravel with a don's confident step,
the dead in my invisible knapsack. (TWD 41)

Finally, when a reader recognizes his own experience or empathizes with my story, the creative act brings even more satisfaction by expanding the horizons of grief beyond my individual loss.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 37-41

A teacher's self-eulogy

JEFFREY BERMAN[*]

Jeff Berman's fantasy came true yesterday when his body was found in his office minutes after teaching the final class of the semester. For decades the popular English professor had disclosed to his students that he wanted to expire teaching, dying in harness. The bizarre wish came true. He was eighty-two years old and had been teaching at the University at Albany for fifty-four years, longer than any other faculty member in that institution's history. The news stunned his devoted students, though one expressed the hope that his teacher had submitted final grades in the course before passing on. Administrators also expressed sorrow, but one admitted privately that he thought Berman should have retired years earlier. Upon turning seventy, Jeff boasted that he planned to continue teaching for as long as he received the top teaching evaluations in his department – a statement that a dean, who wished to remain anonymous, believes manipulated students into giving him higher evaluations than he deserved. Few of his colleagues could be reached for comment, since those who were still alive had retired long ago and moved to Florida.

Jeff could never adequately explain to others or to himself his passion for teaching. Throughout his career he believed that his university underappreciated and undercompensated him, yet he also knew that he was getting paid for something he loved to do, and secretly he thought he should have paid his students for the privilege of teaching and being taught by them. Until the death in 2004 of his beloved wife Barbara, whom he met in his college freshman English class in 1963, he believed he was the luckiest person in the world, in love with both his wife and work, twin passions that complemented each other.

Barbara's death profoundly affected Jeff's teaching, and in his memoir *Dying to Teach* he affirmed the power of writing to memorialize loss and work through grief. He did not idealize her, as Clym Yeobright idealizes his mother in Thomas Hardy's novel *The Return of the Native*, in whose death he is implicated. A harsh, vindictive mother who never accepts Clym's marriage to an equally wilful woman, Mrs. Yeobright is rendered into a "sublime saint" by her guilt-ridden son, who has attempted to lock her out of his heart and house and who, in the process, loses his eyesight. Jeff also had problems with his vision and, later in life, with his hearing, but he did not spend the rest of his life preaching his wife's death. He maintained, however, that it was pedagogically appropriate to speak about her when discussing death scenes in literature. An overwhelming majority of his students agreed with him, believing that death education was valuable both academically and psychologically. Hearing him speak about his wife's death, they made comments like, "For the first time in my college career, I was able to relate to my professor on a personal, human level"; "You never spoke like you were above us but as though you were one of us"; "I believe when a professor is able to share not only his personal life, but also his emotions, it helps the students relate to him/her"; "I found that I can learn

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the basics in any English class but I learn 'life lessons,' so to speak, when professors choose to speak about personal experience". Several students stated that hearing their professor talk about his wife helped them to get to know him better as a person, which in turn motivated them to work harder. They felt a close connection to him as a result of his self-disclosures, and they believed that his candor and openness encouraged these qualities in their own writings.

Jeff's students described his pedagogy as "teaching from the heart". "It is fine to teach by the book, but the chance of students relating to literature and finding interest in it is so much less. To teach from the heart requires a lot of courage both by the professor and the students". The same person believed that Jeff's self-disclosures "allowed students to be completely free and open within class discussion and in their papers. It was very calming to be able to be open in such a way. It allowed our class to be a support group for one another". Jeff believed in teaching from the heart and the mind, and, perhaps, the soul, in which he had only a vague belief. He never lost faith in the power of teaching to transform lives, and his students appreciated his confidence in them.

Jeff became identified with the pedagogy of personal writing, and many of his books explored the extent to which teaching based on understanding the other can transform the classroom experience. Unlike most of his colleagues in English studies, who theorized the other without attempting to find out specifically how their students felt about teachers, Jeff was constantly soliciting his students' reactions to his teaching. His students wrote weekly reader-response diaries in literature courses, and they often filled out anonymous questionnaires at the end of the semester. In addition, he interviewed many of his students months and sometimes years after they completed courses with him.

Few of Jeff's colleagues shared his enthusiasm for self-disclosing writing. Empathy, which was the cornerstone of his teaching, attracted more interest from psychology professors and psychotherapists than from those in his own discipline. His colleagues' lack of interest in empathic teaching disappointed him at first, but he welcomed the challenge to develop a pedagogical approach that enabled students to write about vexing life issues. As he wrote at the end of his book *Empathic Teaching*, "I have not discovered anything new; Heinz Kohut and Carl Rogers were tireless advocates of the use of empathy in psychotherapy, and they both recognized its application to education. Other teachers and researchers have investigated the dynamics of self-disclosure in a variety of settings. My contribution is to show how empathy and self-disclosure can be combined safely and productively in the classroom" (374).

Jeff did not believe that personal writing was superior to traditional argumentative writing, based on critique, but he sought to redress the imbalance that favored the latter over the former in academia. Most of the English majors whom he taught told him that he was the first college teacher to allow them to use the first person pronoun when they wrote. As a student remarked, "I have encountered professors who, after I disclosed that I was taking 'Love and Loss,' emphatically stated that it was not a professional approach to teaching. More importantly, I was told, it was not appropriate to encourage students to write personally about their lives, as it allowed a professor a more personal interaction with his or her students. It's not condoned, I was told once, and it creates the risk of overfamiliarity with students. Previous to this course, I would have agreed, but after learning what I have learned, it's impossible to imagine learning a more valuable lesson. In order to become a better human, I believe now, it's integral to be able to connect and empathize with people". Jeff himself did not use "I" until the epilogue of his third book, *Narcissism and the Novel*. He agreed with Gerald Graff that the "opposition between persuasive and creative/personal modes of writing is needlessly overdrawn" (248), and that college teachers should encourage both types of prose.

RADICAL AND CONSERVATIVE

Jeff's teaching was both radical and conservative. His commitment to the self-disclosing classroom and emphasis on "risky writing" were considered not only radical but also dangerous. Few rhetoric and composition scholars endorsed such "risky teaching". His decision to emphasize the

"basics of writing" – grammar, diction, style, compression, voice, point of view – was perceived as conservative if not reactionary, particularly during an age in which rhetoric and composition were influenced heavily by cultural studies, with its implicitly Marxist bias. As he remarked in *Empathic Teaching*, his emphasis on grammar in writing courses differed from the "bonehead English" courses satirized by Bernard Malamud in his novel *A New Life*, and it also differed from the "back to basics" approach championed by conservative educators such as Allan Bloom, E.D. Hirsch, and Dinesh D'Souza. Instead of writing about their summer vacation, Jeff's students wrote about being depressed during their summer vacation, or about grieving the loss of a loved one. The knowledge that only their writing skills would be critiqued, not their emotions, enabled students to write openly and truthfully about the most important issues in their lives.

Jeff was radical and conservative in other ways. In the mid 1970s he taught the first psychoanalytic literary course at his university, and he demonstrated in his 1994 book *Diaries to an English Professor* that introspective diary writing was a powerful educational and psychological experience. Many students told him that they learned more about themselves by writing weekly psychoanalytic diaries than by spending months in psychotherapy. Psychoanalytic diary writing was radical not because it demonstrated that writing promotes self-mastery and self-healing – writers have long known this – but because he showed that the teacher did not need to play the role of therapist for students to experience therapeutic relief. Yet at the same time Jeff was conservative, preferring literature to theory, and agreeing with James Hynes's definition of literature in his satirical academic novel *The Lecturer's Tale*: "A literary work is any work of imaginative writing – prose, poetry, or drama – that is inherently more *interesting* – rich, complex, mysterious – than anything that can be said *about* it" (24; emphasis in original).

To determine how teachers make a difference in their students' lives, Jeff kept a folder of unsolicited letters and emails he received over the years. Some former students wrote to him asking for a letter of reference, but most wrote simply to express gratitude for his teaching. The folder grew thick over time, and when he began reading them closely, he discovered that most students saw him in the same way. Students did not praise his originality or brilliance, qualities that he did not see in himself. Nor did they generally refer to his publications, which occupied so much of his time and attention. A few praised the writing and reading skills he taught them, but most appreciated his passion for teaching, which made his courses challenging, and they especially valued his ability to relate literature to life. "Thank you for everything you taught me about Hemingway and Fitzgerald", wrote one student. "Most of all thank you for teaching me about the quality of being human and humane. I'm a better person because of your teaching". What they valued most was his interest in their education and his belief in their potential. He was particularly struck when a former student, who had written about his father's suicide, sent him a letter from graduate school and quoted from a passage that Jeff used in *Empathic Teaching*: "I came across the Henry Adams quote the other day, the one that says, 'A teacher never knows where their influence really stops,' but yours definitely has not. I still feel that your class truly helped me to continue to face my situation. Unfortunately, I had a friend take his life this past year. Though it was his third time trying, and we all knew that eventually he would succeed, it is still very hard. But your influence continues with me".

Jeff's students saw him as approachable, warm, down-to-earth, and honest. They were not intimidated by his knowledge, fearful of his judgments, or confused by his language. He enjoyed bright students but he also welcomed average students, who sometimes learned the most from his courses. He believed that education was reciprocal. "Many of the ideas that I hold important about teaching were expressed by you during our classes", wrote one man who desired to be a college professor. "One, at the top of this list, is a teacher must know he or she will learn from their students every day. You knew that". Another student, who took Jeff's "Age of Freud" course, wrote that "I remember a different feel in the classroom that I never felt anywhere else. When the course was done, right after the final [exam], I remember everyone taking a moment, one after the other, to come up and shake your hand and say 'Thank you' and that was how I knew it was different than any other previous course".

Jeff's critics, of whom there were many, did not see him in the same way. The reviews of his books were often mixed; those who praised his approach to teaching asserted that not many professors could encourage personal writing without traumatizing their students, and those who criticized his books claimed that he was voyeuristic, narcissistic, and predatory. Jeff was stung by the negative criticisms, but he believed that his students were the most accurate judges of his work.

Jeff often made jokes at his own expense, believing that they helped to make the student/teacher relationship closer to friend/friend. Many of his students later became life-long friends. He knew how to maintain professional boundaries. He did not have affairs with students; did not go drinking with them, as many of his colleagues did; and did not dress like them. Indeed, as he grew older, he was one of the few male teachers who always wore a tie and jacket to class. But he tried to understand his students' lives and published several books containing their life writings. Jeff grew up in the 1960s, when the word "relevance" became the slogan for educational reform, and he urged his students to make connections between their lives and those of the fictional characters discussed in class. He believed in motivating them to do their best work and fulfilling their potential, but he also sympathized with their difficulties and encouraged them to write essays and diaries in which they engaged in problem-solving.

Jeff believed in what Kay Redfield Jamison calls exuberant teaching, in which teachers' joy and passion infect their students, motivating them to do their best work. Throughout his life he loved teaching, but it became increasingly important to him after his wife's death and helped to fill a huge void in his life. As he turned sixty, he read George Steiner's book *Lessons of the Masters*, and he was struck by the three types of pedagogical relationships discussed by the eminent literary critic:

> Simplifying, one makes out three principal scenarios or structures of relation. Masters have destroyed their disciples both psychologically and, in rarer cases, physically. They have broken their spirits, consumed their hopes, exploited their dependence and individuality. The domain of the soul has its vampires. In counterpoint, disciples, pupils, apprentices have subverted, betrayed, and ruined their Masters. Again, this drama has both mental and physical attributes... The third category is that of exchange, of an eros of reciprocal trust and, indeed, love... By a process of interaction, of osmosis, the Master learns from his disciple as he teaches him. (2)

Jeff identified with the third pedagogical relationship, based on reciprocal trust and, within professional boundaries, love. He did not regard himself as a Master – he was keenly aware of the deficiency of his education, which was strikingly clear from his unfamiliarity with many of Steiner's wide-ranging literary, philosophical, and religious allusions. (He would have done anything to have Steiner's encyclopedic memory, command of languages, and magisterial prose style.) Nor did he regard his students as disciples – on the contrary, he required his students to disagree, in their essays, with his interpretations of literature. He believed that he learned as much from his students as he hoped they learned from him. He agreed wholeheartedly with Steiner that "there is no craft more privileged" than teaching: "To awaken in another human being powers, dreams beyond one's own; to induce in others a love for that which one loves; to make of one's inward present their future: this is a threefold adventure like no other". For Steiner, and for Jeff, one need not be a Master teacher to reap the rewards of teaching: "Even at a humble level – that of the schoolmaster – to teach, to teach well, is to be accomplice to transcendent possibility" (183-184).

Like most academics, Jeff valued knowledge and wisdom, but he placed the highest worth on goodness. He loved reading about real and fictional characters who sought, with varying degrees of success, to be good. He was fortunate to have been married for thirty-five years to a good woman to whom he was devoted, and who inspired him to do his best. He sought to keep Barbara's memory alive after her death, first by speaking about her to his students, then by writing a book about her, and finally by teaching new courses on death education that allowed him to teach to others what he was himself learning. He taught many thousands of students over a career that spanned more than half a

century, and although he forgot most of their names, he never stopped feeling affection for them, even love. He never taught James Hilton's story *Good-bye, Mr. Chips*, but as he grew older, he identified with the venerable pedagogue, who also lost a beautiful wife to premature death. If Jeff could have bid farewell to his students, it might have sounded like Mr. Chips's valedictory speech to the pupils of Brookfield Academy: "I have thousands of faces in my mind – the faces of boys. If you come and see me again in years to come – as I hope you all will – I shall try to remember those older faces of yours, but it's just possible I shan't be able to – and then some day you'll see me somewhere and I shan't recognize you and you'll say to yourself, 'The old boy does n't remember me.' [Laughter] But I *do* remember you – as you are *now*. That's the point. In my mind you never grow up at all. Never" (89). Jeff's students could tell from his voice, even when he grew old and frail, that his passion for teaching remained, and that Barbara was never far from him.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 43-47

"Psychodrama of the ordinary" in the works of Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and David Lynch

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Theatre and film are the two most appealing visual mediums of artistic expression. Since their appeal is total, including all possible senses, the ultimate mental impact theatre and film produce is quite impressive for the audience in its visual as well as psychological dimensions. This, in turn, provides the representatives of the two genres with a very powerful tool in influencing and inspiring human subconsciousness.

Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and David Lynch are to be found within a group of the most psyche-oriented artists within the last decades. Unorthodox in their methods of transmitting their values to the audience, the artists set their works in an aura frequently classified by critics as bordering on the bizarre and subconscious. Their unconventional feel of the surrounding reality, combined with an unlimited imagination enable all three artists to reconstruct their audiences' perception of reality into their authorized view on it. It is also thanks to Beckettian, Pinterian and Lynchian constructions of personal metaphysics that the audience acquire a chance of being faced with an astounding familiarity between their private experiences and what is depicted on screen or stage. Such peculiar, yet overwhelming feeling of being exposed to a theatrical self-reflection results in releasing the contents of our subconsciousness, spurring imagination to reach beyond the material and the visible.

The same technique of delving into the human mind can be traced back to D J. L. Moreno's psychodrama therapy. Psychodrama as an approach to therapy was introduced in the United States in 1925. Designed for a collective projection of the subconscious, psychodrama was a medical procedure used in treating mental illness, which consisted of communal reenactment of a given situation in order to understand one's *true* emotions. It was based on "the discovery of aspects of the subconscious, through spontaneous dramatic situations" (Moreno, 130). It defined the function of the role as a means to "enter the unconscious from the social world and bring shape and order into it" (130). The basic assumption of Moreno was that every individual is subjected to a role-playing model of existence on different levels of consciousness. According to him, the act is the beginning of every existence:

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> The relationship of roles to the situations in which the individual operates (status) and the relation of role as significantly related to ego has been emphasized by myself. (…) Role is the unit of culture; ego and role are in continuous interaction (Moreno, 134).

Analogically, ego and role are one, and create a united organism. The theory also undertakes the enactment of personal life dramas with fellow patients taking on the roles of auxiliary egos, who, by recreating certain past situations, enable the patient to vocalize and correct their previous mistakes. The final effect of the therapy brings about the desired clarification on the part of the patient, producing an automatic catharsis and bringing back the lacking confidence, self-awareness and self-forgiveness for the mistakes of the past.

> It (psychodrama) produces a healing effect – not in the spectator (secondary catharsis) but in the producer – actors who produce the drama and, at the same time, liberate themselves from it (139).

Moreno's idea of getting into the subconscious by means of conjoining several alter egos in the process of role playing reflects to a large extent the model of plot construction presented by Beckett, Pinter and Lynch. In all three cases, the artists pursue the same principle of the characters' multiple role playing. The characters reflect each other (Vladimir and Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*), reflect desires (Sarah in *The Lover*, Ruth in *The Homecoming*) or acquire numerous personalities losing their true identity (Laura Palmer in *Twin Peaks*). They all subject themselves to the judgmental perceptions of others, since they think they exist only when they are perceived. None of them feel free to act independently and speak their minds. They all look for the reflection of their genuine selves in the surroundings of "others." It is thanks to those "others" – communities (*Twin Peaks*), families (*The Homecoming*) or companions (*Waiting for Godot*) that they regain their lost identities and redefine themselves. The theme of rediscovering oneself in the artists' works is more often than never followed by a phase of liberation from all the unwanted artificial roles imposed on the characters due to circumstances. The mediums they use to support the motif of psychodrama in their works vary considerably. One of the most prevailing themes is by far the one that refers to their search for the truth and the establishment of moral standards, the prerequisite of exploring beneath the surface.

After 1970, with the post-structuralist theory, the debate on the Freudian concept of the "Uncanny" began. The original aim of this belief was to focus on another facet of aesthetics referring to less beautiful and positive emotions bringing our anxiety and unease to the surface. The German equivalent Freud chose to describe was referred to as "unheimlich", which directly translated means "unhomely". According to Freud: "*Unheimlich* is the name for everything that ought to have remained… secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud, 345). The English word "uncanny" was established by him as possibly the closest in meaning to "unheimlich", since it carries the same emotional attributes.

> A basic definition of the uncanny is what is perceived when something supposedly familiar in fact appears strange and unfamiliar. Equally, the reverse can be an instance of the uncanny: when something unfamiliar strikes one as familiar (Buse, 33).

The notion of "uncanny" to a large extent reflects the subject matter of Beckett, Pinter and Lynch's works. It is in Beckett, where the emotions of mutual interdependence (*Endgame*), craveing for company in sharing the pain of living (*Waiting for Godot*) or impossibility of self-evaluation (*Krapp's Last Tape*) appear to the audience as both strange and familiar. Voyeurism, role playing, physical violence or self-inflicted guilt are those of Lynchian motifs every viewer can identify with. We look at what we are and we read about events we have witnessed before. The seemingly unfamiliar set up leads to familiar and experienced aspects of life. Yet, the truth of the matter lies beneath the surface of the text, regardless of it being delivered to the screen or on paper. Pinter provides an ideal example of this in *The Homecoming*:

> Although *The Homecoming* is not on the surface 'about' Oedipal desire or neurosis, it is quite manifestly about the *heimlich*. The title of the play alerts us to this fact, and like the titles of many of Pinter's earlier plays – *The Room*, *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, *The Basement*, *Tea Party* – it carries connotations of intimate physical spaces or cosy familiar events (Buse, 37).

The uncanny, sickly erotic and divided character of the family comes to the surface, once more uncovering the dark side of human nature in all its rawness and textual explicitness. The misleading, heimlich titles of the plays have their accurate counterparts in Lynch's *Twin Peaks* or *Blue Velvet*, where the soothingly sounding titles cover literally (*Blue Velvet*) and figuratively (*Twin Peaks*) the source of corruption.

> Lynch's films have many levels, and all take a look below the surface of what is depicted as normal, to explore the hidden darkness. The societies in his films, from Victorian London to Twin Peaks, appear superficially wholesome but all have some form of danger within. In many ways, this sickness beneath the surface defines the narrative drive in all of his works (Le Blanc, 9).

Both *heimlich* and *unheimlich* have an equal impact on the artists in their search for the truth that lies beneath. Both terms are also crucial in defining the surrounding and the outside environment their characters are set in as the artists' first stage towards introducing audiences to their authorized concept of psychodrama. The following phase of the process is built up and influenced by diverse mediums such as: textual structure of the works (including undertones, repetitions and omissions), setting or development of alter egos. Before all of those, however, another element of the psychodrama background has to be laid out. This element is classed as menace, which in the artists' instance can be analysed on two separate levels: as the menace of the ordinary and the menace of language.

Menace of the ordinary widely used by the artists in film and plays as a technique of establishing the right tempo, discourse and atmosphere of the story derives from the fickleness of genres. Contrary to logic, it is frequently during the tragedies when we laugh and we shed tears following the comedies. What makes us laugh and cry may have its origin on two emotionally opposite poles, yet having one common background: the sensation of unease and mental isolation.

> Tragedy, rising from an excess of energy, in spite of the tears, releases a certain pleasure. Comedy, on the other hand, rising from an emotional evasion, in spite of the laughter, releases a certain melancholy. For this reason the works of Moliére are sadder than the tragedies of Racine. But both these opposing forms of the theatrical phenomenon – tragedy and comedy, specializing in turn in Laughter or Terror and Pity – rise from the same source: our anxiety and solitude (Barrault, 24).

It is due to a sense of detachment we regularly experience that the activity of watching a film or going to the theatre instills in us a feeling of relief and emotional comfort, as people – gregarious by nature – find safety in numbers. The very same psychological maneuver is exercised by Beckett, Pinter and Lynch on their audiences. The enclosed communities of *Twin Peaks*, *The Homecoming* or *Waiting for Godot* release the seeming touch of consolation and psychological security, as these are the best grounds to build suspense upon.

> It is this feeling of solitude, which we meet with in life which has given us the desire to gather in one agreed meeting place. It is this feeling of solitude which has evoked the theatrical representation (Barrault, 24).

Hence, all the artists present their audiences with a similar build-up of atmosphere. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* we witness a simple dialogue-based situation between two comrades

within the process of waiting. The grain of insecurity, this "waiting" theme gradually evokes and gives the audience a sense of unease that does not leave them until the end of the play and remains long afterwards. Pinter's *The Birthday Party* is quite similar to the Beckettian play in the sense of the motif of waiting, which accompanies the characters and proves to be a catalyst for Stanley's demise. Nonetheless, in this case, as well as in Beckett, the end of the play suggests a comeback to "normality" and shows that this situation may well have never happened. A different indication of the menacing end is presented in Lynch's pictures, where the idyllic existence of superficial American towns is overshadowed by the dark side of human nature and corruption it breeds. Here, the happy ending is never fulfilled, since the instances of *Blue Velvet* or *Twin Peaks* show that evil occupies a permanent place in every community and, thus, will always remain an integral part of human existence. In this very instance it is the linguistic code and the specific type of discourse that signify the lapse between the neutral and the menacing within the process of the plot creation pursued by the artists.

The notion of linguistic menace is by far a crucial part of the artists' mode of staging psychodrama of the ordinary. Menace of language finds its reflection in the technique of multi-layered undertones, repetitions and self-echoing. Also, their means of using extensive pauses (especially in the case of Beckett and Pinter) is of paramount importance. The appearance of pauses in Beckett's and Pinter's writings proves to be a personal manifesto of the authors' viewpoints on the role of language as a medium of interpersonal communication. For Samuel Beckett, pauses strive to visualize, amongst others, the ultimate incapability of language to put across intended meanings.

> The pauses in these plays are crucial. They enable Beckett to present: silences of inadequacy, when characters cannot find the words they need; silences of repression, when they are struck dumb by the attitude of their interlocutor or by their sense that they might be breaking a social taboo; and silences of anticipation, when they await the response of the other which will give them a temporary sense of existence (Worton, 75).

This quest for essence presented by the artists is additionally supported and to a large extent juxtaposed with numerous repetitions, ranging from doubled statements to the involving multiple characters process of self-echoing.

As far as Pinter is concerned, the well known line from *The Birthday Party*: "This house is on the list" (Pinter 22, 27, 30) is consecutively re-mentioned by Meg and Pete and Meg and Stanley on three different occasions. The line, in itself being thought-provoking, builds up its menacing effect on the reader by its constant re-appearance, going from a non-important casual statement to a secret coded message. As Andrew Kennedy suggests:

> A Pinter character's speech can, eventually, be 'pinned down' to an identifiable person even when it is used to conceal identity (Kennedy, 169).

These are, then, the instances of sheer linguistic menace, the technique which Pinter unquestionably has proven to have mastered.

A familiar method of constructing linguistic apprehension can be observed within the example of Lynch's *Blue Velvet* – the film which is saturated with numerous self-echoing statements. Dorothy's re-appearing line: "I carry your disease in me", signifies her fascination with Jeffrey's sense of internal purity and innocence that she so yearns for. In her words: "I need you in me" she voices her desire to fill herself with the boy's genuine goodness. In the bar Paul approaches subjugated Jeffrey clapping his hands twice in front of the boy's eyes, saying: "I'm Paul". The act of clapping hands signals an attempt to awaken Jeffrey from an idyllic long-term dream he lived in and to make him aware of the fact that what seemed to be a mere illusion is now the only reality he will be able to know and the only one he is doomed to live in. Frank's repeated sentence: "Now is dark", on the other hand, is a warning of the forthcoming dark side of human nature covered with the blackness of night.

The extensive use of repetition and self-echoing statements in all the mentioned works points back to the technique of psychodrama. The more repeated the sequence is, the more uncomfortable

and creepy it becomes. This viewpoint is reminiscent of the Beckettian idea concerning the privacy of language. According to him, people speak individual languages consisting of other people's utterances. Nothing can be said, it can only be re-said. Nothing can be named. It can only be re-named. Thus, identical utterances have to be used for various purposes, expressing diverse meanings. Hence, no repetition is an exact repetition, either in Beckett or in Pinter. This in itself creates menace. The discourse of Lynch's characters can be equally equivocal, yet, because of its visual aspect, can be represented on more than one linguistic level.

Psychodrama of the ordinary is irrefutable amongst the most innovative, yet unconventional artistic concepts. The main aim of this paper is to prove Samuel Beckett, Harold Pinter and David Lynch as being prime representatives of these two notions in both drama and film.Through this complimentary breakdown of aspects involving the works of Lynch, Beckett and Pinter we can assimilate more easily the abstract and figurative content of what can only be described as an authorized depiction of human existence paralleled with its theatrical dimension.The question of reality is emphasized in all the artists' works, which allows the audience to appreciate the gap that has been bridged by the artists' realization that the audience has an automatic appreciation of what they are seeing and reading due to the mirror process of reality versus its theatrical representation. Therefore, if to exist means to be perceived, it is the continuous process of the external and internal self-reflection that constitutes the essence of human existence and elucidates our *true* identities.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 49-58

Travel in life, travel in literature. A chosen exile

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As it was once said by O. Wilde "a map of the world without the land of Utopia is a worthless map, since it does not include the only land toward which humanity always addresses itself". Traveling is a notion charged with miscellaneous societal and psychological notions, that contribute to our cultural worldviews and to the manifestations of our personal and collective self. Travelling is connected either with a sense of beginning a new, "shaken off the baggage of the past...standing at the threshold of experience" (Rank, 1959), either with a return to a past identified with a paradisiacal childhood, escaping from the alienating adult-life. In this paper we examine the literary representations of journey, proceeding into a comparative analysis of Greek and American texts not in order to display all kinds of diversities that exist inside the American or the Greek journey literature, but in order to exhibit what the prevailing notions can uncover for Amerikanhood and Greek-hood. And we use those notions as case-studies of what kind of subtexts can be traced within the dominant body of a national literature and society. We conclude that there are significant differences in the notion of the traveler, yet journey maintains its tremendous importance in both cultures and aims to express common patterns of human destiny and perception throughout times.

If, according to Davis (1998), "language becomes the vehicle... to locate our place in the world and to understand the social and political implications of society", it is equally truth that story telling and literature in general constitute a huge representation of our collective biography.

Northrop Frye identifies the central myth of literature, in its narrative aspect, with the quest myth. He sees the significance of the quest myth "in its vision of the end of social effort, the innocent world of fulfilled desires, the free human society". Perhaps the most complete form of this utopian vision is found in the combined Old and New Testaments of the Bible. Together they comprise the archetypal story of loss and recovery of the identity and Paradise. Greek mythology has the same general framework. There we also find the story of man's creation, his relationship to the Gods, and his (hers) loss of the Golden Age. The Paradise and Golden Age myth is recovered in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* or in the myth of Camelot with the establishment of the ideal Kingdom, where a justified life could be accomplished.

All these stories present to us the basic elements of the quest pattern in classic form. So basic is the quest pattern to narrative, that Joseph Campbell, in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, labels

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it the "monomyth". Campbell's description is an enlargement on the basic formulae represented in the rites of passage: separation – initiation – discovery – return. The quest of the hero is an *extended search* for something that has been lost or taken away from him, something that ought to have been his birthright. He *encounters fabulous forces* and *wins a decisive victory*. The successful completion of this search reveals to the hero the secret of his *true dentity* and enables him to *return* from his mysterious adventure and take his rightful position in society. And to accomplish all that, most of all he *travels!*

The Quest of Travel

The theme of travel constitutes a prominent topic in the literatures of the world, hidden under various names or forms. In inner travelling, in political or personal quest, in migration or return, quester is always "on the road". It is in the archetypal pattern of the travelling myth – the central myth of the entire literature – that will be the structural framework of our study.

The very meaning of journey brings us in front of fundamental notions such as space, time and culture, being a fruitful framework for intercultural perspectives, as it necessarily carries parameters like similarity and difference, identity and otherness, change and transformation. Trough his or hers journeys human can realize that his or her motherland does not form in a fundamental or unchangeable way his identity; neither he or she is connected with a certain type of religious faith. Color, race, nation, religion, political perceptions and ideology, characteristics that can eventually become key-holders in social inclusion or exclusion, can be filtered through the mystical and deep act of travelling. And the traveller can find a way to finally express international common values and perceptions behind their different versions. This way travel could be not just a procedure of spatial transfer but a procedure of a mighty transformation. *We could say that journey consist an identity in constant construction.*

Since the very beginning human kind tried to express its desire for something more it could ever have. And the agony, the pain and the hope that desire produced gave rise to so many personal, political, religious, or even scientific efforts to transform yourself, your era and your society, according to your needs and to the socio-political parameters of your environment. Yet, it was always "there". Mythology, as an arhetypal form of literature, through the reading of Journey myths, tries to ritualize the prominent quest, the new enterprise. Forms of which can be found in the mythology of every culture. Several different myths of Greek origin exist, the most familiar is the story of *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, or Theseus, and so many other, written B.C. to express our evolution till this day.

Journey finds its first textual expression 2500 years ago through the epic Odyssia of Homer, a fundamental text of the Western civilization and of the Greek and world literature that, since then, consists an eternal and common prototype and a symbol that transcends time and space. Many significant writers were enchanted by the Homeric journeys, from Dante, bringing Odysseus to Hell, to Kavafis, that personifies to Odyssey the urge of humanity to seek knowledge and experience. We could also mention Joyce's *Odyssey*, Pound's *Cantos*, Walcot's *Homer*, or Kazantzakis's *Odyssey*. The Homeric adventures function as an archetype in the structure of big, synthetic texts, invested with various sub-texts and perceptions.

Yet reproduction never sieze in literature. Even Hesiod's story became the source for the later Roman version of the myth told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. Hamilton's *Mythology* is a good source for the retelling of both versions. You will also find the story of how the world and mankind were created, together with the story of Prometheus, the first hero who travelled to gain the fire from Mighty Gods in favour of humans. Comparisons can be easily found in European, Eskimo, North American Indian, and Chinese mythology. Travelling, then, spring from a very basic human need – not just to find who you really are and your true destiny as mentioned before, but also to give answers to bigger question about life and deat, to "trace" the hidden "reasons why". In other words, to transform chaos into order. And that constitutes a universal archetype.

Yet, as it was written, one of our objectives will be to procceed into a comparative study, between two of the worlds most prominent literatures: Greek and American, having much more than

Nobel prize winners to offer, and yet prominent Nobel prizes too. But most important, having the priviledge, along with other literatures of the world, to express the world view of two different corners of a unique planet. Meditteranean region and North America.

From sea to sea

Apart from mythological and homeric journeys that shaped at a significant extent our collective perception of the Self (even Oedipus was in a journey when met his fate) in Greek literature special place require the ethnological journeys of Herodotus in Greece, Egypt, Asia, South Italy (Kato Italia) and Sicily. He was the first to point that the "other" is the mirror through whom we can trace ourselves (Kapisinski 2007: 349). The forceful traveler that broke the limits of time provinciality is at the same time the travel-comrade of the contemporary man, whom fights against "that" time provinciality. By provinciality we mean the perception of time as just present. After all, the motive underneath journey's urge of historiography's father (Herodotus) is curiosity, the very same reason for the growth of scientific knowledge and even Enlightenment. Herodotus while learns like an enthusiastic child, considers significant in his work the notion of freedom, a fundamental notion in the Greek way of Thinking and world view, and yet a notion fundamental for the journey itself! The outstanding icons that he creates through the ethnographic and geographic information he distributes, make each reader a fellow journey man or woman. It is those qualities that made Willamowitz, the significant philologist of the 20th century, to write that "the world will never seize to read Herodotus stories".

Yet, as two dynamic notions, travelling and Literature constantly evolve. From time to time journey required almost symbolic status. For instance it is impossible to study Romanticism ommiting the notion of journey. The very soul of the yearn for journey was to escape reality and the alienations that industrialization and capitalism brought with it, to search for an integrated self into nature, away from the petit bourgeois convictions of European society. And even then Mediterranean was perceived as a lost, forgotten Paradise, carrying an Adam after the *Fall*; broken marbles, a dazzling sea, and wonderful forests. Goethe went to Italy (*Italienische Reise*, 1816-17) Chateaubriand to Greece, Minor Asia, Middle East, Spain, Tynis (*Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, 1811 and *Voyage en Amérique*, 1826), Lamartine to Ottoman Empire (*Voyage en Orient*, 1835) Byron travelled across mediterranean to Constantinople (Istanbul) (*Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, 1812-1818), and Shelley, with the shine of an expensive utopia in his eyes, went to Italy. Travelling into space became an excuse for travelling into ideas and sentiments and people.

Carrying a variety of subtexts, and characteristics that interviene between a subjective and objective perception of the world, journey texts never stop "growing".

Despite the fact some of the roots of contemporary literature can be traced into the 19th century, journey literature meets an offspring in the 30's, expressing the need to escape from (and denounce a) world between 2 devastating, western centric wars. Indeed, during the first postwar years and the 30's, significant European and American writers (gathering in Paris or other European Metropolis, creating a very special, and unique sense of American nostalgia that can not be integrated in this paper) produced texts were the dual importance of travelling is promoted (subjective and objective). Their hidden question is what traveling means for the traveler and what the traveler means for traveling. Yet in the postwar world a fundamental change evolves, regarding travelling and its transferability. The impressive diminishment of distances (due to traveling technology, like flying) the equally impressive vanishment of the periodical perception, in other words the condensation of the mystical and yet common experience of humanity that travel could offer, happened to an extent that make those offerings inactive.

Since then we don't travel anymore primarily to perceive, to learn. Most of the valuable information are considered as given and are included in touristic books. The true traveling experience lies in the edges of common grounds, were we should find the distinctive nature of examples; in other words to find similarities and contradictions. The majority of writers nowadays produces text about journey. Many discover in the journey literature an intellect form of journalistic paper, others a lyric form of essay, others use it directly as a promotion tool for political agendas.

Further more it is almost impossible to mention writers such as Tony Morrison, Forster, Below, Golding Mom, Exiperi, Tomas Man etc omitting traveling. Deep down the main question that journey brings equals the question Euripides and T. Williams's heroes face: To stay into a place means eventually to be corrupted despite all your excuses. To get away means never to acquire roots and familial grounds. Yet writers (artists in general) as human beings, live integrated in the society, but their art (writing) is an act of rupture and escape from norms. Their target is moving, to remind Golding's *The Moving Target*, in which a wonderful text about Delphi is exposed, or, as Brontski says "what matters is not what is said but what it follows". Many writers, like Lorca, even if not really "travelling", transformed the places were they were born or lived into archetypal or symbolic spaces of unfulfilled desires or of pure childhood's dreams that were spoiled from the corrupted adulthood. It is in this point were journey experience unifies the world from sea to sea, gaming between memory and its absence that have to do with the living experience itself.

Journey texts and the archetype of journey

The travel myth creates a pattern that tries to capture the multiple rout of individual and collective human action in different eras and in different fields. Despite the complexity of mythical versions, common patterns exist in different cultures. It is these common recurring patterns that Jung (1989) saw as manifestations of what he called "the collective unconscious". Located in our psyche, it is the repository of a shared memory, an inheritance from our common ancestors, and world-views. Hence, our stories are "ritualized events" (Swartzman, 1979) or the public expressions of our private experiences. As Stone (1975) wrote for another occasion "like other collective enterprises, are collective representations: *they represent the arrangements of the society and historical era in which it is carried on*". To fully explore the matter of Archetypes would involve the thorough study of the modern social mythographers: Sir James Frazer, Carl Jung, and Joseph Campbell. Such a study is neither within the scope of this paper nor the reach of our knowledge. However, some attempt will be made to connect their ideas on archetypes. Frazer observed in *The Golden Bough*, (1966) his study of myth, magic, and ritual in primitive society, that there was an unexplainable similarity existed in certain tribal rituals in tribes so separate; no contact had ever taken place. He saw in these ritual patterns man's common imaginative connection to the universe he or she inhabits. Archetypes, for Jung, were forms of intuition, perception, and apprehension, inborn and located in the unconscious. Most commonly, he observed, these archetypes took the form of images, usually in our dreams, and occurred in connection with transitional stages of life, such as birth and death. Jung saw in the appearance of these images in myth stories –images like the Earth as a mother symbol, or the tree of life – factors so basic to human experience that they had to be recorded. Hence, our earliest myth stories are the first public expression of these private experiences. Joseph Campbell, in his *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, sees in the ancient hero-myths the eternal human struggle for identity (the hero-quest myth as "monomyth"). Campbell believes that since myths and religions have always followed the same archetypes, they can not be the exclusive "right" of any particular race, religion, or region. From this point of view journey man or journey woman embodies what Leski (webography) saw as Collective Human in human tragedy, as the Human that transcends his or her country, in order to express the collective soul and the feeling of justice of humanity. Having high hopes for his-her justifications, but having extreme possibilities life to let him-her down. Campbell also contends that in the modern world the ancient heritage of myth is in full decay: The meaning, which the great coordinating mythologies provided in order to be used by groups, has been lost; all meaning is now in the individual. Today, as he argues, similar to Porter criticism on modernity, because of science and technology, communication between consciousness and the unconscious is interrupted. He sees the modern "hero-deed" as the effort to bring light again to "the lost Atlantis of the coordinated souls". In fact, from this point of view, our interest, our search for the hero quester, the traveller, in modern literature, expresses an urge for a travel of itself as a mean to compromise the anxieties of modern times!

The common thread that ties the work of Frazer, Jung, and Campbell together is the idea that we all share recurring patterns of behaviour. It is in Northrop Frye's book on myth and archetypes, *The Anatomy of Criticism* (2000), where a systematic study of these recurring patterns and their relationship to literature exist. These brought the scientific findings of the mythographers to bear on literary criticism. It seems to us that Frye completes the cycle of thought begun with Frazer's observations of basic recurring patterns of ritual behavior. Jung's notion that mythology evolved by the impulse to express these common experiences, possessed by all men in the "collective unconscious", is completed by Frye, who saw in the recurring patterns of imagery in mythology the basis of all literature. It is precisely at that point, where Jung's unconscious archetypal images became consciously, expressed in myth, that Frye begins to evaluate the importance of these images in literature. For Frye archetypes are the recurring patterns of imagery (long distant places, like wastelands or biblical gardens), character types (scapegoats or heroes), events (rites of living, rites of passage), stories (monster-slaying), or themes (good versus evil) that provide the structural principles that give literature its "unity". It is not surprising that literary criticism has already pointed that in fact the topics of literature are limited, (the questions how each and every one of us deals with death, life, love, and power) the forms are numerical.

Archetypes, therefore, are those images that recur often enough in literature to become recognizable as elements of one's own imaginative experience, and yet elements of our collective hidden language and story. Consider, for example, the snake. For us, the snake as something evil or sinister needs no introduction. Classical and Biblical allusions abound. Snake is an archetype carrying the message that worth travelling places (or goals) are not easily reached. Serpents and (by analogy) dragons are constant villains. There is the serpent in the Garden of Eden. Perseus slays both a dragon and the Medusa, whose permanent hairdo is of writhing snakes. A serpent guards the Golden Fleece. St. George saves his people from the dragon. In chapter three of the book of Genesis, God ordains an eternal hatred between reptiles and humans. Even Carl Sagan called his study on the evolution of human intelligence, *The Dragons of Eden*, speculating about the implacable hostility between man and reptile, between man and his fears of liberated knowledge. He wonders whether it is just accidental that the common human sounds used to demand silence or attract attention sound like imitations of hissing snakes. Could it be also that dragons posed a real danger to our protohuman ancestors a few million years ago, and this terror was lodged in what Sagan calls the Repetilian-complex core of our brain, at a point in our development where we shared a common experience with reptiles? In the poems "The Snake", by Emily Dickinson, "Filling Station", by A.M. Klein, and "Snake", by D.H. Lawrence, we can see that the power of the archetype is still as compelling as ever. Yet, one's personal imagination and world view influences the readings. In the first two poems, each poet retains the traditional associations of snakes as evil. On the other hand, Lawrence chooses to reverse the archetypal meanings. He sees the snake as good, and blames the prejudice against them on "the voice of his education" – that is, on the archetype.

Yet, in front of a place gate, having a snake, or a dragon, or a reptile against, (having nature of compromises or power against) we can view the hero as yet another journeyman on the standard path taken by all mythological heroes in their search for identity. To realise that Thoreau's journey in his *Walden Pond*, where he reflects upon the "essential facts of life", and Hemingway's quest in his hunting saga *The Green Hills of Africa* for the "ideal, single perfect shot" share a common narrative pattern, is to begin to see a significance that goes beyond individual works, a significance that searches, through comparisons and controversies, what makes us "one".

Comparative analysis

Heroes and cultural symbols satisfy personal psychological desires, but they also serve larger, societal needs. From the one hand (and schematically speaking) we have the American's *placelessness or rootlessness, the* American sense of (no) belonging (through expansion) *vs* the Greek sense of intense belonging. In Greece the inventing "*we"* was based in opposition to the hegemony of Imperial

culture. Yet there was an inner opposition also, between an ideal past and a mediocre present. Despite history, modern Greece could not feed or protect or promote you. It was a country of heavy baggages standing at the end line of the experience. This had also political implications. As Kiberd (1995: 247) notices People are lulled by their leaders to "become drunk with remembrance", as a way of reconciling people to the mediocrity of the present.

That created a dual literature also, either a literature of intense criticism and ironic perception (in political writers mostly) either of that yearn for the glorious past, through eternal symbols, that were used in many cases as a way of denouncing present, on the contrary with its use from the political agenda. We may find in various subtexts traces of an "Oedipal revolt" against the most "archaic mother", (Kristeva, 1991): Greece in our case, and view the West (America as its leading country financially and military), as the symbolic father to whom we may address ourselves or transfer ourselves (migration). In Empirikos *The Great Eastern* (1990-1992) for instance, a Freudian (1995) hypersexual boat journey, full of phallic icons and sexual relations (a big scandal in its era) the tremendous hyperoceanic boat "The Great Eastern" travels from Liverpool in the peak of Victorianism to New York, symbolizing among others an attempt to a deep human liberation from family centricism and conservativism ("don't they know we bring them the plague? as Freud wrote in New York port). And that came in contradiction not only to the Greek, but also to the values of the American society of that era, or at least what many people saw American society could be. For the Greek Nobel prize Winner Poet Od. Elytis that book was made by the material of psychoanalysis and the visions of a poet. All kinds of sexual expression exist (from masturbation to homosexuality, from paedophilia to fetishism etc) and reminding Fourie's theory that "instincts could lead to a socialistic society", Elytis called the *Great Eastern* as a political outopia (Elytis 1980: 68).

From the other side, the political reality made Greece, in this retrospect, to be transformed into the magic/mystical land of our childhood that has been transferred in our adult years into the lost space/land of an Eden that was simply never enough, yet an Eden that never looses its charm. Thousand of Greeks migrate to "new worlds" until the late 20th century when this migration wave reverse itself: "I said I ll go far away. Now. Holding whatever in my hand. My bag, my photographic machine, I'll travel deep within my land, deep within my body to discover my true Self" What I give, what they give to me, and injustice always prevails, Golden air of life..." says Elytis in *The little mariner* (1992). "For Centuries now upon my blue volcanoes", he writes in the poem "Exit" of the same book, describing that journey in Aegean sea. A sea-Eden that comparing our restricted nature with our unrestricted dreams, exercises a semiotic violence (like Brecht said we could name as violent not the waters of the river but the river shore that restricted them), and corresponds to the psychoanalytic concept of "archaic mother," the unconscious source of carnage and violence. And yet also sourse of hope and desperation and Love, and Passion.

That passion has something addressed to a maternal figure in its core. Kazantzakis (2002), marking the conventional beginning of contemporary journey literature in Greece with his book *Travelling* (1926), rumpled throughout Greece in a yearn for "the cry of mother land" or for the "conscience of nature". He distinguishes the notion of traveler from tourist, both as attitude and world view, urging to find the uniqueness of his land (any land) through the broadening of a world perception that can include all and omitting nothing, apart from fears and convictions. Any kind of place is the world in microscale, and yet unique, with its advantages and disadvantages. Extremities and narcissism, he declares, are human inventions because they are not naturally integrated to a world that is consisting of constant moving. Travel becomes inner, a way to find your secret self in the landscapes and the faces of others.

That otherness inside of a monocultural society is something that burdens the inner dialogue of Greekhood. "Wherever I go Greece hurts me!" wrote the Nobel prize winner Seferis ("With G. S. way" / *Poems*) as a reminding of the constant pain of memory. Greekhood does not seek the bridge, like Krane did, nor the Snake to symbolise travelling dispositions, but the boat to travel into the rough Aegean sea, searching Oedipus steps, like Matthew Arnold in the other Edge of old Europe. Despite contradictious inner proceedings, in the basic parametres, while Greece had to re- invented one and

for all from the past, America could be constantly re-invented from the future. Greek sense of travelling had to carry heavy luggage. The painful presence of an absence (of our glorious past status that contributed into a mediocre or even hard life), and the memory of that idealized country, is symbolized not into a snake as a gate keeper for instance, but into the Aegean sea, objectification of an open journey that leads nowhere but to the journey itself; "The boat that carries me is named Agony 937" ("With G. S. way" / *Poems*) wrote Seferis.

A deep concern in the Greek notion of travelling is the political separation, in which the social power promoted petit bourgeosism and conservativism as fundamental tools in the naturalisation process of power and identity-construction in the post war Mediterranean, during the cold war period. For instance despite the fact well integrated poets like Elytis and Seferis "travelled" into the ancient waves of Aegean to find the tragic and glorious fate of our kind, and within it, the Greek sense of future through past, more political writers, like Anagnostakis or Ritsos, denounced it to deconstruct Greek sociopolitical status quo. Anagnostakis ("Days of 1969 B. C." *Poems 1941-1971*) puts a tragic smile on the boat (look the lyric above), making its destination to face present and not to hide behind the past, and in that present he finds the concentration camps that were built after the Greek civil war, and the alienation of new order and money that heat Greece in the 50's and 60's: "I cheat, you cheat, we cheat, wherever I travel Greece hurts me as the poet wrote, the Greece of the Greeks"; Ritsos (1981) ironically cries, "Oh yes! Once upon a time they were saying about an Aegean poetry! "Makronisos" (a consentration camp) 500 dead, "Yaros" 1000 disabled! Oh yes! They were saying once about an Aegean poetry!". Yet other symbolisms exist. Those symbolisms are humble in political poets like Ritsos, trying to construct a folk- "pupil's mythology" of contemporary Greece, away from super heroes, to denounce the narcissism of nationalistic order and upper classes. *The smoked saucepan*, symbol of farmer life in a pro-industrial society like Greece and humble voices, are used in order to claim people's voice back.

Schematically speaking (because similarities exist in all literatures) Greek poetry uses the eternal moon, or wise or singing bird to symbolise a philosophical notion of Liberty and inner Wisdom (Interestingly Afroamerican poet Maya Angelou in her *I Know Why a Caged Bird Sings* is one of the Americans that uses similar examples). American poetry uses the deer (a symbol of the Anglosaxon tradition from Byron to Scorseze's film) or even symbols of technological passage like the bridge, or the wild forests. Seferis speaks with the ancient dead, or the eternal moon or the singing bird (in the tragic island of Cyprus) to find answers in difficult human questions, and Elytis seeks eternal in the sun, in his first period of poetical creativity. Yet for those poets Greece, in a variety of examples, remains the cause to search the collective human enterprise and destiny, being the arhaic mother of the planet-earth. A mother that can never feed you (in food and knowledge) enough, (Ritsos, see also Kazan in America America) can never protect you enough, (Anagnostakis) can never ease her and your pains enough (Seferis), but despite all that can still acquire the symbolic status of a tremendous symbol, either through its philosophical darkness (Seferis) either through its natural light (Elytis). Greece is at the same time a heavy burden, a pride and a wound that can not be carried to its extent, but carries the human subject wherever he or she travels.

On the contrary, Wecter wrote for the Traveller of he new world: "America's country is in his understanding: he carries it wherever he goes" (webograhy). Yet, and despite all that, the American traveler, the hero-quester, is the inheritor of this tradition, with some important differences. American literature contains no hero who has completed his quest and returned to restore the perfect human community. "We have no Odysseus or Aeneas to give final form to the American myth." (webography) As Rank argues, one major cause for the incompleteness of the American myth is the lack of history. Virgil had the advantage of writing at the end of a long period of meaningful history. His *Aeneid* is really a celebration of a goal achieved the end of a long journey which began at Troy and ended with the apotheosis of Augustan Rome. Early American writers had no such historical advantage. That gave a very special sense of belonging and a very special sense of travelling. One major strain of the American tradition sees life and history as just beginning, having no burdens from the past... as the New Jerusalem. "America was perceived... as the original paradise, a second chance for the human race".

R.W.B. Lewis (1955: 208) observes in his *American Adam*, that is an Adam before the fall. An Emersonian figure, "the simple genuine self against the whole world". This view of the genuine American hero is best represented in the works of Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman. Heroes in their own works, their quests took them into garden-like places where they sought to preserve the vision of America's and new world's destiny. Soon, however, time and space, cities modernity and capitalism, brought an end to the vision of innocence and newness. America was moving west, and conflict inevitably arose at the point where the advancing frontier and the wilderness collided. It is from the opposition of civilization and the wilderness that the American hero-quester emerges. What the hero felt when he could no longer retreat into the womb-like world of the Western Frontier, is the feeling of inevitability that compels the hero to face his fate or destiny. And understands his path can not be different from the one the previous voyagers took, from Ulysses to Thoreau. Thus this destiny is transferred into the destiny of human neglection and revengeful disappointment.

Yet comparing the two case studies we can observe that it is not just that in Greece travelling was connected with a notion of past, while in America with a notion of future. It is also that different political manipulation exist, as the overprojection of the past in political-colonised countries like Greece, was not only a way to accept present mediocrity, but even further a way to promote passivity and a certain notion of "citizenship" that denounced journey itself and its questions in a way! This procedure equally promoted an internalization of an "otherness" of the self, according to the standards that have been imposed by the hegemonic cultures, alienating your very relation with the past. A past full of philosophical agonies and an active notion of citizenship, that falsely you claim you wanted to preserve.... This division in Greek soul still marks Greekhood, despite the fact the famous Greek light could always be used (like in Elytis later period) as a return into a fundamental darkness. In Greek case study you could not beginning a new, you had to continue (successfully or not it was and is an extra burden) the road taken literary thousand years ago.

In the Americanhood, this sense of beginning a new gave rise to a new type of traveller. He had shaken off the baggage of the past, and could be seen standing at the threshold of experience, looking hopefully out at the Westward future which lay before him. Characteristic of the new hero is his innocence, identified most readily with, as R.W.B. Lewis observes in his *American Adam*, Adam before the fall. Soon he has to face journey out of paradise. And quest the same old return to an Itaka that is allways less that it should! Refugee becomes his innocence. Refugee from the contemporary, alienating self.

In Greece the refugee was the return to the womb of the symbolic past. Sikelianos travels the hidden path from Athens to Eleysina, searching for religious mysticism of antiquity (like Frazer in *The Golden Brounch*), personified the old psyche of "cosmos" in the forces of nature, like for instance the bear. Of course he is the poet that chooses to translate Whitman in Greek Language, finding the inner connection of brilliant minds and deep souls. *Indeed, Leaves of Grass* (1980, first ed. 1885) tried to capture the scope of the American experience, but Whitman was limited to his age, and, however remarkably he captures the quality of response to that age, his vision was incomplete. Even *The Bridge* (1930), Hart Crane's epic poem about America, (webography, Nawrocki, 2006) which was a deliberate attempt to complete the American myth, finally fails. His use of the Brooklyn Bridge was the mythic symbol of man's travelling from one place to another. His quest for unity with the natural world around him lacked the authenticity and scope of a true epic-poem like the *Aeneid*, which provided the inspiration for Crane's poem. Instead, in a pragmatic culture, the bridge settled back into what it has always been for Americans, an iron passage from Manhattan to Brooklyn and back. Perhaps this limitation says a lot about the eternal failure of each Íew Jerusalem to rescue humanity from our dystopias and miseries.

What is remarkable about the stories of initiation, though, is the feeling of inevitability that compels the hero to face his fate or destiny. Together with the sense of "out there" or a "place entered into", which characterizes the testing-ground place for the quester, is the correlative sense of "something that must be done". For the American traveller the choice of whether to enter the wilderness or not becomes a decision of whether to confront reality or not, thus a symbol of a passage

from the neverland of Childhood, that unspoiled era, to the compromises and the dis-honesty of adulthood (Karasavvidou, 1998).

On the other hand a reverse rout exists: Sometimes the inevitability of a journey does not come from a quest to avoid reality in order to find a child-like place of innocence. It comes from some inner compulsion to obey a "law", according to one's own nature – to follow what Abraham Maslow (*Toward a Psychology of Being*) calls our "intrinsic conscience". This compulsion to be true to your own nature, the sense of "calling", is what forces Henderson, in S. Bellow's novel, to follow the Siren-like call (being a connection with Homer's Odyssey, arhetype): "I want, I want" this inner voice is saying toward a journey to get to know Africa. *Thus, what is sacrificed due to knowledge in each of these quest stories is innocence:* the unspoiled comfort, protection, ease, and simple pleasures of childhood. Not only because the traveller must separate himself from his/hers every-day place, having initiation as one of the loneliest experiences a human being can undergo. But also because he /she becomes an "adult" through this procedure and the "getting to know" experiences it brings with it.

In all cases, the self-delusion of the journey in literature (and perhaps in life too) is identified with the immemorial age-long-biblical scheme: "Ignorance=Blessedness". That, however, is ablated so harshly from (and by) the real life. The nostalgia of a true, deep place that exists "out there" it is consist by a metaphysical notion for something that slept away, and appears peculiar interests and expressions in each national literature. But equally so, in both Greek and American examples, these attempts have also created different pieces of the "palimsiston", different angles of the same mythology that human kind shares, expressing our eternal journey(s).

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 59-63

A post-Kleinian Oedipus

MEG HARRIS WILLIAMS[*]

Sophocles' Oedipus cycle consists of 3 plays written some 15 years apart, but all part of his mature oeuvre. They do not follow the chronology of the myth – the last part of the story comes first. There *is* a chronology however: it is the story of Sophocles' exploration of what constitutes a thinking person. He uses as vehicle for this exploration an Everyman whom we first meet as a king, a tyrannos – and who ultimately ends a beggar, a blind suppliant at the shrine of his internal Fury-gods, and in the process completes his journey of self-knowledge.

I shall be talking here about the middle play, the Aristotelian model for tragic form, in both Kleinian terms of a mother-baby relationship, in which it can be seen as a weaning story, and also in post-Kleinian terms of how ideas are born from a context of emotional conflict. In the *Tyrannos* we can see in the protagonists of the mind-city an externalised representation of the internal dialogue between mother and child, and the way a new thought is 'suffered', that is to say, gets in to the mind and finds a symbol for its existence. It is an internal journey – as represented by the way the protagonist stands still and holds centre stage whilst figures from his 'past' or inner world are called up for confrontation. This is co-extensive with the formal structure of the play itself, which is not something superimposed on the myth, but evolves according to its internal logic or organic form – the dramatist's unconscious commitment and exploration of his theme.

Whereas Freud saw theatre as sublimation, in the post-Kleinian view the mind – like the play – is made by its thoughts as they well up from their unconscious roots and find a symbolic form, rather than the other way round. Bion coined the term 'catastrophic change' after Aristotle – to denote how the thinking process changes the existing structure of the mind.

Sophocles recognized, as did Aeschylus before him, that those 'dread goddesses' – the 'Furies' of man's primeval nature – were significant forces in the mind, and both society and the individual needed to pay them their due. Aeschylus, like Freud, envisaged a type of secondary process or Athenian law that could contain and civilize these mysterious dark forces – forces which are generally associated with femininity as well as emotionality and the underworld or under-conscious world. Primary processes need to be shaped and ordered by secondary processes of rational or conscious intentionality lest they break out in the form of action and pollute civic life. In Bion's post-Kleinian philosophy, however, love, hate and dread are fundamental to any symbolmaking process, and need to be embraced not curbed or denied. The focus is on weathering the inevitable turbulence of this emotional confrontation – a process that Bion terms 'suffering', again following the classical etymology of 'passion'. In this way a thinking capacity is gradually established in the growing mind.

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Sophocles differs from Aeschylus rather as Bion differs from Freud. He saw that simply holding disturbing forces in check or deflecting them through sublimation is a very partial solution to the pressures of unconscious phantasy and its gods. Creon in *Antigone* failed to do this and his alternative method – to try to expel them – resulted only in setting the familiar revenge cycle in motion, a type of stupidity that is depressingly familiar, particularly in the case of world leaders. In his two subsequent *Oedipus* plays Sophocles looked for a constructive alternative – a way to *think through* the kind of emotional disturbance that presents itself as a plague or sickness in the mind or city of the personality.

The *Oedipus Tyrannos* is about two kinds of thinking – the first represented by solving the riddle of the Sphinx, a childlike but arid cleverness appropriate to a latency phase of development. The mystery of life is reduced to a linear pattern of 4, 2 and 3 leggedness. It was necessary at the time, like passing your school exams. It got him into the palace. Oedipus is a clever boy as everybody in his family-city-country agrees. But he has got to a point where it is time to make contact with deeper internal forces – not so much repressed, as latent: for there are many linguistic indications that Oedipus with one part of his mind knows very well who he is all the time, but has not been able to make use of this knowledge in his personal development.

What is now to be put to the test is his capacity to 'remember' the source of all his passionate attachments – his babyhood – in a way that overwhelms him with emotional turbulence and shakes his mental constitution to the core. It is an entirely different type of thinking from that which so impressed the Sphinx. To underline this fact, the two types of thinking are carried on simultaneously and this is what constitutes Sophocles' famous dramatic irony. It is really an irony about levels of knowledge and how they dance in and out of one another. On the one hand Oedipus is searching for the 'facts' about his birth, in the purely rational and detective sense; but on the other, the quest of his internal *daimon* or soul, is for the mystery of his growth and identity, something which cannot be understood without re-engaging with the passionate baby that he once was. Unlike Creon in the *Antigone*, Oedipus accepts from the beginning that his kingship has to be earned not just once but repeatedly: the city, he says, contains his 'children' (ll. 1, 69) – his mental fertility – and is not merely evidence of his authority over others and himself.

Oedipus' famous anger (*orge*) is a manifestation of his *daimon*, his Promethean fiery spirit, and is as essential a tool for his investigation as his *gnome,* his faculty of recognition. His anger comes from the emotional depths, his cool reasoning logicality from his willpower. Yet they work together, moving in a type of counterpoint alongside the rhythmic 'lunge' of a *daimon* (immortal spirit) who pushes him towards the *catastrophe*, in the classical sense of climax and revelation. The *daimon* strikes from both inside and outside the protagonists; and the idea of 'doubleness' recurs continually, impressing on us that there is more than one layer of meaning involved at each point. The entire play is a minefield of puns and ambiguities. Another group of words links, and at the same time separates, different types of knowledge – matter-of-fact understanding, conscious investigation, oracular 'seeing', and the type of knowing most characteristic of Oedipus – *gnome*, innate intelligence or power of recognition (sometimes translated 'mother-wit')[1]. In addition Sophocles frequently puns on another word for knowing, *eidos*, that through its sound echoes the name of Oedipus, who is thus both swollen-footed and knowing-footed – one who painfully pursues a path to knowledge. There are puns throughout on 'feet' as stepping towards a truth, and as being cruelly hounded by a truth.

From the very beginning Oedipus seems to guess instinctively that Thebes' disease has some intimate relation to his own birth and identity, as when he says, with the play's characteristic ambiguity, that there are 'None as sick as I' (l. 61). He then considers what tools he has for dealing

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[1] See E.F. Watling, transl. *Sophocles: the Theban Plays* (Penguin, 1947, p. 38; D. Taylor, *Sophocles: the Theban Plays,* Methuen, 1986, p. 21. On the significance of *gnome* (thought) and its relation to *gignoskein* (recognition) see ed. Gould, p. 63; on its contrast with the *phronein* (prudence) preferred by Creon, see pp. 80-81. Gould writes: 'Oedipus' *gnome* is a mystery to the Chorus. They do not really know how he arrives at his decisions.' (p. 74).

with this sickness of the absence of self-knowledge and recognises that "Alone, had I no key/ I'd lose the track". He is searching for a key (a *symbolon*) – literally a symbol to contain the idea of his identity – and this is found when he reviews his relationship with Jocasta, the mother whom he regarded as his wife.

First however there are two cognitive temptations to be overcome. One is represented by Teiresias, whose knowledge, like all superstition, is always of 'dreadful secrets' (l. 374)[2]. He does not tell lies about facts, but about their meaning. For Teiresias, any increase in knowledge must be turned into a misfortune. He tells Oedipus that his 'birthday' (the day he discovers the mystery of his birth) also marks the day of his death (l. 499): implying that, as the Chorus will say later, there is no point in facing life at all. It is better not to be born than to know the full extent of one's sinfulness. However Oedipus recognises that Teiresias with his intimidatory tactics is another version of the Sphinx, and that he – 'Oedipus the ignorant' – is once again required by the city of his mind to establish contact with his innate 'intelligence'. He does not know the Answer, but he has reached the stage where ignorance is no longer a viable state of mind. Teiresias can only win if Oedipus should baulk at the threshold of this present developmental disturbance and turn his back on the investigation.

The second temptation comes with Creon. Where Teiresias made Oedipus feel weak, Creon makes him feel contemptuous and stimulates another unprofitable tyrannical outburst. Oedipus recovers his self-restraint, and when he releases Creon from being scapegoat, he knows very well that it signals 'my ruin, my death or my disgrace' (ll. 742-743). This is the point of Oedipus' commitment to the internal investigation which forms the central section of the play – he is now prepared to face the type of humiliation that feels like death. This constitutes a type of dream-analysis and it is conducted with the help of Jocasta as mother, muse and psychoanalyst.

The sensitive relationship with Jocasta, whom he says he respects 'more than all these men here', is instrumental in the process of 'remembering', 'this is as much an imaginative reconstruction in the present as a literal recollection of past trauma'. Oedipus ignores everyone else and enters a dreamlike state:

> Strange,
> hearing you just now... my mind wandered,
> my thoughts racing back and forth. (ll. 800-802)

Responding to the urgency of his desire to know, Jocasta conjures back into his consciousness two old 'shepherds' who looked after him as a baby – the two breasts of his infant mind who fed him on the high pastures of the mountain. The story which Jocasta helps to evoke in him to remember goes something like this:

Oedipus, a child of two cities – Thebes and Corinth – was conceived by parents of whom he has a 'drunken' dream and in this sense 'remembers' his birth origins. These parents were tempestuous and passionate in character – so much so that he abandoned them as an infant for more equanimical 'foster-parents' who then brought him up in princely comfort, with doting indulgence. They could not bear to tell him the 'truth' themselves, but gave him the strength and independence to leave them when the time came and return to his first home. At the disturbing 'crossroads' where he overcame his father's hostility to him in a rocky passage underneath Cithaeron. There is a link between the meeting of the three roads and the tripartite riddle of the Sphinx, which (because of the topography) becomes associated with Laius: the host of a riddling, teasing mentality which never wanted the queen's son to be born, and tried to bar his entrance to life, at the expense of a curse on the city.) Oedipus felt that the wit given him by his mother enabled him to conquer ('kill') this mentality, which he then interpreted as meaning that he should be her husband and king of her city. Now, to his horror, he begins to learn

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2 One story was that Teiresias was castrated or blinded after watching snakes copulating; another that he was blinded by Hera after saying that women enjoyed sex more than men. His blindness is thus associated with knowledge-as-castration (ed. Gould, p. 50).

that his mother was instrumental in his original 'expulsion': it wasn't simply that he chose to exchange a Theban breast for a Corinthian one; in fact they both belonged to one mother – 'The child she bore!' – an internal object now evoking both love and hate together. Jocasta then introduces Oedipus to the two old shepherd-breasts (one Theban, one Corinthian) who had passed him from hand to hand on the mountain of Cithaeron when he was an infant. Having done this, she goes indoors to hang herself – as the mother may be said to hang up the breasts on weaning. Her suicide symbolises the end of her function in aiding Oedipus' self-revelation. Oedipus is now ready to internalise the concept of his mother.

The discovery of the two shepherds thus represents the climax of the play – the genuine classical 'catastrophe' when the symbol is formed and sheds light on all the parts which make its whole. Oedipus now sees his mother in a different light. Jocsta becomes the earthy mediator of a higher power – Tyche, Chance or Destiny:

> I must see my origins face-to-face...
> I count myself the son of Chance,
> the great goddess, giver of all good things –
> I'll never see myself disgraced. She is my mother!

Chance or Tyche he says is his *real* mother. This is not merely defiance – it has a psychic reality and a sense of revelation. Tyche has the significance of an internal figure or deity rather than a person – an internal object. At the very moment of this speech, which is a type of joyous Tychean Magnificat, Jocasta is hanging herself in her chamber in the house, offstage. The phase of motherhood in which she was split into good and bad, in the infant's kingly possession, has been surpassed; Jocasta has demonstrated to Oedipus that she was both the one who fed him and who caused him pain. She was party to the rivets in his ankles, the sharp nipples in the caring breasts – the wild, dark powers of Cithaeron who coexist with the homely shepherds, sharing their territory. Through a triumph of integration, these opposing attributes or agents of Oedipus' internal mother have been returned to their source in Tyche. Unlike the literal breasts this force of nature will never run dry.

This dynamic weaning process has been painful for Jocasta too, and there were times when she would have liked to 'call off this search!/ My suffering is enough.' She, like the shepherds who are part of her, makes attempts to deflect the process – yet knowing, all the while, that Oedipus' desire to discover the 'mystery of his birth' is by now overwhelming and will carry him through to the end. Jocasta does not have to do much, simply allow the facts to appear before him – her experience, like his, is essentially one of 'suffering'. His self-blinding, like her hanging, and like the birthmark of his ankles, is an act of recognition. He uses Jocasta's doubleness – her two-pronged brooch (recalling the two-pronged fork of Laius) – for this stab of recognition, reinforced by his parents as combined object. It is described as 'digging the twin points down into the sockets of his eyes' (l. 1405), and the word used for sockets (*arthra*) is the same as that for the joints of his ankles.

This language is linked with the stab or lunge of Destiny 'over and over, the stabbing daggers, stab of memory/ raking me insane'. The stabbing represents the internalisation of his new knowledge as the pattern of his life takes shape:

> O triple roads – it all comes back, the secret,
> Dark ravine, and the oaks closing in
> Where the three roads join... (ll. 1530-1532)

The crossroads has now become the landscape of the birth canal. After 'drinking his father's blood' in gestation, he 'came here' to the house of his kingship, the 'harbour' of his mother's body[3],

[3] The metaphor of a ploughed field or harbour is used frequently in the play for Jocasta's womb, home to father and son.

and ‘did it all again’ – now drinking his mother’s milk. ‘Apollo ordained it’ – he says – ‘but the hand that struck my eyes was mine ... I did it!’ (ll. 1467-1471). The two types of *daimon* come into line – the daimon of the self and the daimon of the internal object. Oedipus has discovered that his *internal* parents are neither Polybus and Merope, nor Laius and Jocasta, but Apollo and Tyche – the genesis perhaps of the future goddess Psyche.

Oedipus is no longer *tyrannos.* He has been deposed, or rather he has deposed himself, just as the baby weans himself. He has been ‘saved from death’, he says, for some further unknown ‘strange destiny’. But internally strengthened,

> My troubles are mine
> And I am the only man alive who can sustain them. (ll. 1547-1549)

It has been a story of ‘catastrophic change’ in the Bionian transcendent sense of moving onto the next phase of development – whether literally and physically, or in the sense of the next state of mind. It is significant that at the end of the play, Oedipus is allowed to briefly touch his two daughters, who will be his new eyes in this next internal landscape, crisscrossing his new mental territory until he finds another haven.

NOTE

*Q*uotations are from *Sophocles: The Three Theban Plays*, translated by Robert Fagles. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 65-66

The daring young man of the flying trapeze

FABIO TRONCARELLI[*]

At the end of September 1933, William Saroyan sent to Whit Burnett, director of the "Story Magazine", a story called: *The daring young man on the flying trapeze.* Against any hope, the story was accepted and published in February 1934: it was a great hit, a very popular and successful text. Whit Burnett was of Irish origin and was a good friend of Edward O'Brien, a writer of Irish origin, born in Boston. O 'Brien, in turn, was a friend of another writer of Irish origin born in Boston, Myles Connolly, who worked as a scriptwriter in Hollywood[1]. Connolly spoke about Saroyan to a dear friend, the director Frank Capra, who had almost finished shooting a film considered a B-movie. The film was called *It happened one nigh*t and became soon one of the greatest achievements in the history of Hollywood, winning five Oscars.

Capra was Italian and was looking for a personal triumph. When knew that a young Armenian, son of immigrants like him and miserable like him, had written a story like that, became almost sick, burned by a furious jealousy.

The worst was that this successful story ended with a suicide and that, for someone like Capra, an emigrant able to be triumphant against all the difficulties, who spent years as a hobo on the trains, this was really too much. So the little Sicilian, the son of Bisacquino, the country of both the ruthless Mafia and the ruthless hunger, had a stroke of genius. He called a group of country singers[2] and he shot a scene out the script in which all sang *The daring young man on the flying trapeze*.

The title of the story was in fact the title of a song, an old song inspired by a famous trapeze artist, Jules Léotard, which fascinated everyone, namely women and girls, with its numbers on the trapeze. Saroyan had mentioned this song with bitter irony: America had touched the bottom of the Depression and there was no more place for the lightness and art of an acrobat. There was only place for the death that kills the art and the taste of life. But Capra don't share this sad conclusion. And quoted the song on the trapeze with a different meaning: his film, which would be released simultaneously to the story, the 22 February 1934, was the antidote to the melancholy of the written text.

Capra ordered to all to sing aloud, to actors and extras, including reluctant Claudette Colbert, including Clark Gable: to sing with passion, with cheerfulness on the music of the Hillibilly. Result?

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1 W. Saroyan, *Starting with a Tree*, in J. Darton, *Writers on Writing*, New York, H. Holt and Times, 2002.

2 Silver Screen Magazine, February 1934: photos of the scene.

One of the most memorable scenes of the whole history of cinema. Who is singing? The actors? The extras? No: it's all America that sings. All America of the Roosevelt era, who had a great desire to revenge, which still believed in solidarity inn, in brotherhood, the cheap brotherhood of poor people singing together in a pub.

That song, inserted in the film at the last minute, expressed the very heart of the film: the triumph of the spirit of pioneers, still alive despite the crisis of Wall Street.

The movie was a great success and Hollywood decided immediately to make another movie now titled as the song, which exploited the popularity of Capra. This film was directed by Clyde Bruckman with Walter Brenann and Mary Brian in 1935. But before this Popeye fought with the man who flies on the trapeze who has stolen his fiancee. The short film came out on 16 March 1934, directed by David Fleischer. Needless to say that is wonderful.

The story that I told is not know to anyone, neither in Italy nor in America. I discovered it, studying the life of the extraordinary director Frank Capra. It is quite interesting to understand his psychology. In the end who was Frank Capra? He was a man whose motto could be: never give up, never surrender. He was able to make a film as *It happened one nigh*t, winnning five Oscars, without a penny, without the support of the producer, without the players he wanted and without even the music. The song improvised on the set is the only music that is heard in a film that anticipates the modern aspirations to "direct sound".

The public liked very much the movie for this very reason: because it was an unusual Hollywood movie showing an unusual America.

Clark Gable, dragged in the film without his contentment, became a sex symbol because played without a vest, bare-chested, challenging the hypocrisy of his generation, full of grease and of shiny. Claudette Colbert, who hated the script, became famous not for her look but for her legs, her sexy legs exposed to get a ride. No, it was not really the usual America: Capra's country is the realm of cheaters, tricksters, charlatans, swindlers, capricious, bolds. Funny, impulsive, erratic men and women, wonderful interpreters of a Comedy written by Plautus with the help of Pinocchio. Behind them, images of the Depression become visible, worthy of the camera of Dorothea Lange: dusty roads, dark cars, hungry people: men stored on the Greyhounds bound to nothingness; women who wait hours and hours to make a shower; hobos hidden on a train wandering round and round. The film was successful because everyone recognized himself as a citizen of this America, represented in so many words, but also without bitterness. The movie was successful because urged everyone not to despair: not to commit suicide as the protagonist of Saroyan story: to rediscover the spirit of the pioneers, of the emigrants, who does not have to lose more than their chains. To follow his road, seeking his own way: on the road, as Clark Gable and Claudette Colbert did and how, so many years after, writers like Kerouac or actors like Peter Fonda in *Easy rider* will do.

The great history of a nation met with the little history of the individual. Thanks to a song. Thanks to the ambition of the spontaneous "picciotto" of Bisacquino.

And thanks to him Psycoanalysis has something to learn. There is no doubt that Capra was a megalomaniac and a great narcissist. Probably also his reaction against the encouragement to commit suicide of Saroyan was a defence mechanism against his suicide unconscious impulses, which are often the other side of narcissism. The fact remains, however, that Capra is nice and full of energy and that his narcissism has also a positive connotation. To quote André Green, we can say that there is a "narcissism of life" and a "narcissism of death": a pathological narcissism that destroys and a benign narcissism, which helps us to build our life. Only in this case the history of the individual can meet the great history: only when the spirit of the adolescent who never surrenders, catches the aspirations of a society ready to surrender. From this extravagant meeting, as happens in any *coup de foudre*, something unexpected is born: a strange happiness that makes us run on the line without thinking to the hell hole under our feet, like any daring young man flying on the trapeze of life.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 67-76

Mishima Yukio and a literature of the body

*MARIA L. CORREA**

In 1968, Japanese writer Kawabata Yasunari received the Nobel Prize in Literature. This recognition came as a matter of fact to the average Japanese reader, who had long known of and appreciated Kawabata's refined and somewhat melancholic style. Nonetheless, some were surprised at the award not going to the younger Mishima Yukio, one of the best seller Japanese authors at the time. Amongst these, there was Kawabata himself, who barely a couple of years after receiving the Nobel Prize, referred to his younger colleague in the following terms: 'Mishima has extraordinary talent, and it is not just a Japanese talent, but a talent of world scale. It is the kind of genius that comes along perhaps every three hundred years... Before I received the Nobel Prize I said that Mishima would get it... As far as talent goes, Mishima is far superior to me'[1]. One cannot help but wonder about this "literary prodigy", whom a Nobel laureate praised as having such an outstanding talent. Incomparable to Kawabata in terms of style, Mishima Yukio is yet, undoubtedly, one of Japan's greatest authors. Never to receive the great worldwide prizes in literature, Mishima is, still nowadays, one of the most read, translated, and well known authors of East Asia.

Mishima Yukio, born Hiraoka Kimitake, was one of Japan's most prolific contemporary authors, with a very vast and varied series of works that include novels, short stories, essays, poems, theatre plays among other genres. But it is not only the amount of his production what drew hundreds of readers towards his work: Mishima managed to excel in these very diverse genres, making each and every one of his texts a brilliant example of his mastery in style. Certainly, when reading Mishima's works in translations, there is much that is lost in the process of converting them into languages that do not know the multiplicity constituent of Chinese ideograms; however, even after crossing the frontier of translation, Mishima's works have managed to maintain their captivating, universal character.

Mishima gained public recognition in Japan after his first novel *Confessions of a Mask* (1949) was published. The fact that this novel is a rather meticulous account of the inner conflict that a young man experiences as he first discovers his ambiguous sexuality caused a great sensationalist interest which launched the author's career as a polemic writer who was far from afraid of taboo topics[2]. Provocatively enough, Mishima referred to this as his "first autobiography".

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1 Schabecoff, Philip, '*Everyone in Japan Has Heard of Him*' in *The New York Times Magazine*. August 2, 1970. In http://partners.nytimes.com/books/98/10/25/specials/mishima-mag.html Accessed December 11, 2008.

2 Although Mishima has been largely considered a representative "gay author", I believe this matter demands a cautious approach that avoids rough generalizations.

The autobiographical trait has in many cases been considered a crucial element in Mishima's literature; this sort of interpretation is probably most invigorated by the fact that Mishima himself led a life meant to be on display, surrounded both by the voices of disapproval towards his controversial actions as well as by the praising ones of the literary critics. However, Mishima – which, it must not be forgotten, is a pseudonym – wanders freely amidst the ambiguity of reality and fiction, without ever delimiting where one stops and the other begins. Following de Man[3] it can be said that the "fictional" or "real" character of autobiographical texts cannot be easily decided, and that thus the question for the "veracity" of an autobiographic text must be relocated, not concerning the nature of the text itself (that is to say, whether the facts there narrated truthfully correspond to the author's own life or not), but on the conjunction between the author's intention and the reading of such an intention. Therefore, more than a quest for the correspondence between the author's works and the facts of his life, it is *the reality constructed and brought to life by fiction* what calls for attention in Mishima's case.

By 1955, Mishima's popularity among Japanese readers was assured, having already published many of the novels that would earn him international recognition in the years to come: the aforementioned *Confessions of a Mask*, *Thirst for Love* (1950), *Forbidden Colors* (1953), *The Sound of the Waves* (1954). He was then working on the preparation of what is often considered to be his masterpiece: *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956). This year marks also the starting point of another decisive factor in Mishima's life: A weak and sickly kid, Mishima grew up to be a normal yet thin and unattractive man. But in 1955, he decided to undertake bodybuilding lessons and develop his until then poor body. This physical training would be parallel to a series of novels and short stories, as well as essays and plays, which dealt directly and indirectly with the problem of the body (generally described as necessarily beautiful and strong). Among them there are *Kyoko's house* (1959), *The Sailor who Fell from Grace with the Sea* (1963), the essay *Sun and Steel* (1969), and his last work piece, the tetralogy *The Sea of Fertility* (between 1968 and 1970), whose last volume he handed to the publisher the very morning of his suicide[4].

Mishima would carry on with this physical training and this fascination for the body until his death, which would come fifteen years later, by his own hand. Needless to say, the dramatic episode of Mishima's ritual suicide (*seppuku*) at the Japanese Self-Defense Forces Headquarters is still one of the best remembered episodes of this author's life.

THREE RIVERS, THREE MOVEMENTS

'What I was seeking, in short, was a language of the body'[5].

In November of 1970, just a couple of weeks before carrying out his suicide, one that, judging from its very complex nature, cannot but be understood as carefully planned, an exhibition in a Tokyo department store was launched, with the simple title 'Mishima Yukio'[6]. It comprised a series of photographs of the author, many of which showed his half-naked, built-up body in sexually suggestive or sadistic poses. Mishima himself divided the exhibition into four segments, each of which bore the name of a river, which flowed into what he called 'The Sea of Fertility'[7]. These rivers were 'of Writing', 'of Theatre', 'of Body' and 'of Action'. These four elements, clearly stated by

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3 De Man, Paul, '*Autobiography as De-Facement*' in *Comparative Literature*. MLN, Vol. 94, No. 5, Dec., 1979. pp. 919-930.

4 1955 can be considered as a turning point not only in Mishima's own personal life, but also in the style of his works, which seems to switch from a purely narcissistic, homoerotic direction, towards something that could be described as a 'literature of cruelty' and of destruction. This is clearly revealed in his 1956 novel *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*.

5 Mishima, Yukio. *Sun and Steel,* New York, Kodansha International, 1970. p. 7.

6 Stokes, Henry Scott. *Life and Death of Yukio Mishima,* Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle, 1975. p. 109.

7 Needless to say, this is a reference to his last work, the tetratralogy *The Sea of Fertility*, which is widely thought to be the summary of his life as well as of his thought.

Mishima himself as being the 'keys' to his whole life (the exhibition was a sort of retrospective and reinterpretation of his life at what would be its end), are so significant that they cannot be overlooked when attempting an interpretation of his life and work.

In the catalogue of the exhibition, Mishima emphasized that it was the river of Body which opened the way for that of Action to exist, and that these two merged and became one, a river flowing far from that of Writing. Mishima was clearly not the first to state this dichotomy – which echoes the polarity between physical and intellectual work, between body and mind –; however, he was concerned with emphasizing the gap that separates action (carried out through a body) and literature (writing), and took them for mutually exclusive paths. Besides, from this duality, he gave a preeminent position to the pole of Action and Body. The ideal Body, which for the author was the expression of 'reality', could only exist in a field where words played no part whatsoever. Words, on the other hand, although they strive to imitate the beauty of reality (and thus of the body) could nonetheless never reach the same status.

This unsolvable antagonism was present in Mishima's life until its very end. In his essay *Sun and Steel*, Mishima affirms that in the latter period of his life, he grew progressively closer to the field of Action, despising anything related to words. He states that by plunging into the river of Action, he has grown more and more tired of words, as if the quest for an ideal body (an ideal existence, in his terms) had actually liberated him from the prison brought about by words.

Naturally, one cannot naively take Mishima at his 'word' lest one falls into the trap that his assertion seems to open; it is quite obvious that, although his devotion for physical training grew stronger with time, his literary production was in no way depleted. Mishima did not *trade* words for body, but rather he built a new, unachievable objective: to find a writing that was not corrupted by words, *a literature of the act* which did not relate to the corrosiveness inevitably present in words. This, Mishima said, could only be achieved through an *action*. What this action means, and what the true relevance it has for this author's theory of the body is a problem we will approach later on.

The present article is thus an attempt at examining Mishima's dealings with the body according to the sequence of three movements, as they become evident in the aforementioned *Sun and Steel*. The first one leads the sickly kid to become a writer, plunging down deep into the waters of literature. In this first movement a character will be created: Hiraoka renounces his name and adopts 'Mishima' as his true persona, a new mask that he would wear until the very last day of his life, a character whose main endeavor was to tame language and, systematically yet poetically, make a dwelling out of the wild territory of words. The second movement makes Mishima, the writer, the character, pursue a quest for something "truer than words", a language of the ideal body, something that can only be achieved by escaping from the trap of letters and trough action. 'Since my own abnormal bodily existence was doubtless a product of the intellectual corrosion of words, the ideal body – the ideal existence – must, I told myself, be absolutely free from any interference by words'[8]. Needless to say, the focus in this second stage shifts from *words* to the *body*.

These first two movements, although clearly antithetical, are presented as simultaneous: according to Mishima, the fact that words were filled with a power to corrode reality, gave way for two contradictory tendencies to appear within himself. 'One was the determination to press ahead loyally with the corrosive function of words, and to make that my life's work. The other was the desire to encounter reality in some field where words should play no part at all'[9].

This second movement necessarily leads to a blind alley. Mishima will find himself living inside the contradiction of supporting two worlds that could not face each other: that of letters and that of the body. This will give way to a third movement, one about which he will never write in terms as clear as the ones he used to describe the previous two, but which will, nevertheless, become the decisive point in his history: In order to overcome all antagonisms he was to use his body as a means to convey a final act, to look for death by his own hand.

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8 Mishima, Yukio. op. cit. p.11.

9 Ibid. p. 9.

Before dealing in depth with these three movements, let us take a closer look at the dichotomy between language and body, from a psychoanalytical point of view.

MISHIMA'S BODY AND LACAN'S THREE REGISTERS

In *Sun and Steel*, Mishima introduces with great precision this problem of the body as opposed to language. In this essay, which deals mainly with the contradictory existence of the body (referred to as 'the flesh') and words, the following quote can be found. 'When I examine closely my early childhood, I realize that my memory of words reaches back far farther than my memory of the flesh. In the average person, I imagine, the body precedes language. In my case, words came first of all; then – belatedly, with every appearance of extreme reluctance, and already clothed in concepts – came the flesh. It was already, as goes without saying, sadly wasted by words'[10].

This body 'sadly wasted by words' resounds quite intriguingly in several of Mishima's novels. Is it not the same weak, ugly body the novice in *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (who has been filled up with his own father's words about beauty) complains about?[11] Is it not the body of the sickly character in *Confessions of a Mask*? Although it is rather difficult to make a bold equivalence, this similarity is worth remark.

The above citation calls one's attention particularly towards two points. On the one hand, Mishima seems to be aware of the fact that the body is not a previously granted object, something one is born with, but is rather a construction, something that emerges as the product of a certain structure. On the other hand, Mishima's conception of the body, at least in regard to his own body, is clearly determined by a language that precedes it.

These two characteristics, which interestingly enough Mishima finds exclusive of his own experience of the body, cannot but remind us of the Lacanian theory of the body as an outcome of the mirror stage, as previously determined both by the image as well as by language.

The body must necessarily be thought as something acquired, rather than as an immanent possession. That is to say that the subject *has* a body but cannot ever *be* a body. According to Pommier, we can only *have* a body for it was first and foremost an object for the mother's *jouissance*. 'Our body was the object of the maternal desire and, to this extent, we *are* not this body, we can only *have* it, we dwell inside this organic structure that in the beginning was foreign to us and which continues to be the locus for shelter we are more or less used to'[12]. From a Lacanian perspective, body can only be understood as a construction, subordinated to a structure that determines it, and therefore a possession. Thus, if the body must be understood as a construct rather than as an *a priori* element of subjectivity, it is necessary to explore the means and processes through which a body is acquired.

In *Sun and Steel*, Mishima strives to present body as the true expression of *reality*, as the incarnation of the nature of reality. This understanding of the body is indisputable; however, it immediately opens the question of *what* a reality is and *how* it is constituted. Considered from a Lacanian perspective, reality must not simply be differentiated from the register of the Real, but must rather be understood as a compound of the three registers (Symbolic, Imaginary *and* Real) and thus as a structure grounded on all of these fields. We will now inquire the ways in which such a reality is produced, in order to understand how the body can become a formation of reality.

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10 Ibid. p. 8.

11 'I had a weak constitution and was always being defeated by the other boys in running or on the exercise bar [...]'. Mishima, Yukio. *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, Tokyo, Charles E. Tuttle, 1954. p. 5.

12 'Notre corps a d'abord été l'objet du désir maternel et, dans cette mesure, nous ne *sommes* pas ce corps, nous l'*avons* seulement, nous habitons cette charpente organique qui nous a d'abord été étrangère et qui continue d'etre ce lieu d'asile auquel nous nous sommes plus ou moins bien habitués, apparence dont le regard d'autrui ou le miroir nous permettent de vérifier les contours'. Pommier, Gérard. *Naissance et reinassance de l'écriture*, Paris, PUF, 1993. pp. 199-200. Translation from French is mine.

Lacan emphasized on the essential difference between a body and an organism. If an organism is to become a body, a process mediated, firstly, by an image must be required. (Certainly, overstressing the importance of the image might lead to mistakenly ruling out the symbolic dimension; the mere function of the image on the mirror could not ever accomplish to make a body out of an organism. I will deal with this matter later on.) Thus the human infant, who due to its premature birth cannot be considered as the possessor of a completely constituted organism, enters a phase at whose end, and by means of this mediation of the image, the I (and the body as an outcome of the latter[13]) will be produced.

Let us briefly recall the ground upon which the theory of the mirror stage stands: when a six-month-old child stands in front of a mirror, he is able to 'recognize'[14] himself in the image there projected. This *reconnaissance* must be understood in terms of identification, that is, as 'the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image'[15]. What makes this early recognition so peculiar is the fact that the mirror stage occurs among the manifest signs of the child's incomplete anatomy; although he does not yet have an autonomous body, he identifies himself with a fully formed bodily image.

It is the role that the image plays in the mirror stage what Lacan stresses in his first elaboration of this notion. 'The function of the mirror stage thus turns out', says Lacan, 'to be a particular case of the function of imagos, which is to establish a relationship between an organism and its *reality*'[16]. Here, it is the unity of the image what gives this premature, incomplete body a notion of unity (and thus, of reality), by connecting it into the network of other preexistent images that surround and determine it. This new image is born into a compound of adjoining preexisting images, and is thus incorporated into the imaginary realm. It can be said that bodily unity is, in this first approach, based on an image that is perceived as a whole[17] and that this image works as the reference matrix upon which the perception of all objects will be based.

Lacan would later on refer to this matter in the following terms: 'The image of [the subject's] body is the principle of every unity he perceives in objects. Now, he only perceives the unity of this specific image from the outside and in an anticipated manner. Because of this double relation which he has with himself, all the objects of his world are always structured around the wandering shadows of his own ego'[18]. The temporality of the mirror stage is expressed as anticipation. We are dealing with a mirror that shows a future, the unreachable future. This is the fiction in which the subject must necessarily be trapped in, in order to attain an I, to build up a body. Thus, the body could not be anything but an untimely realization of an unattainable future.

Although the crux at this point in the mirror stage is the identification with a mirrored image, its function cannot be limited to this sole matter.

It is usually stated that Lacan's theory on the acquisition of a body through the mirror stage is divided into two phases, one of which stresses on the role of the imaginary and a latter one, in which

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13 'The ego is first and foremost a bodily ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but is itself the projection of a surface'. Freud, Sigmund, *The Ego and the Id* (1923b). S.E., XIX, p. 26. And then, in a footnote: 'I. e. the ego is ultimately derived from bodily sensations, chiefly from those springing from the surface of the body. It may thus be regarded as a mental projection of the surface of the body, besides, as we have seen above, representing the superficies of the mental apparatus'.

14 Understanding *reconnaissance* as identification elucidates the possible criticism to this early recognition when understood in etymological terms, that is to say, as a recurrent knowledge. There is no previous knowledge to which the infant returns in the mirror stage. It is preferably, thus, to opt for the French term "méconnaisance" which avoids a possible confusion.

15 Lacan, Jacques. 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function-as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience'. (1949) *Écrits*, New York, Norton & Company, 2006. p. 76.

16 Ibid. p. 78.

17 Soller, Colete. '*El cuerpo en la enseñanza de Jacques Lacan*' in *Revista Traducciones*. Medellín, Fundación Freudiana de Medellín, No. 1, 1988. pp. 9-38.

18 Lacan, Jacques. *The Seminar, Book II, The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*. New York, Norton & Company, 1988. p. 166.

the symbolic has a preeminent position. Lacan himself clearly argued against there being two periods in his teaching, one centered on an imaginary process, and another, posterior stage (related to his conference in Rome) in which the symbolic had a preeminence it had not been given before[19].

Certainly, the symbolic element which regulates the whole functioning of the mirror stage not only determines it but also precedes it. Another of the elements at stake during the child's encounter with his own image on the mirror is the adult who holds him and towards whom he directs his gaze in a sort of request for approval. This act of reference addresses not just the adult behind the child, but also the Other whom he stands for. This Other, leaving behind the simple status of caretaker, becomes the embodiment of the Law, the locus where meaning itself is contained. It is to this Other as the agent of language, as the bearer *par excellence* of the symbolic authority at which the child glances back, since it is only this symbolic authority which can give meaning to the image the infant recognizes as his own. Thus, this identification can only be seen as a 'translation' in imaginary terms of a symbolic commandment issued by the Other.

It seems clear that Mishima's understanding of words as a corrosive element that antecedes the body is in fact quite similar to Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, as far as the latter emphasizes, in a parallel manner to that of Mishima, that the image of the body is preceded by the 'body of language', which determines it as much as condemns it to the impossibility of ever becoming complete. However, there is yet another element to be taken into account, for in every specular image of the body there must be a remainder, which defines the limits that determine every imaginary relation[20].

The bodily image, to which identification refers, corresponds to the actual organism only in a partial way. Marked by its unavoidable condition of exteriority, this image cannot help but failing in becoming a truthful representation. There is something about the organism that cannot be seized by either the image or by the symbolic, which remains as a testimony of the impossibility of the body, of its condition of fiction. This element belongs to the register of the real. This remainder, this residue that is never apprehended in symbolic or imaginary terms, lingers not only in the structure of the subject itself, but also in the body, becoming the last remnant of *jouissance* that gives birth, among others, to symptoms. This real speaks from within the subject and yet is not completely the voice of his being as a subject.

To outline Lacan's slippery notion of the real is no easy task. However, it is possible to inquire about its nature by looking into its manifestations. For instance, we can find that this real, bursting into the symbolic order in a devastating and inescapable manner, is the core element in the phenomenon of repetition[21]. Let us then take a look at the lights that the notion of repetition might shed on the matter of the real.

In his 11th seminar, Lacan says: 'Repetition first appears in a form that is not clear, that is not self-evident, like a reproduction, or a making present, *in act*. That is why I have placed *The Act* with a large question-mark at the bottom of the blackboard so as to indicate that, as long as we speak of the relations of repetition with the real, this act will remain on our horizon'[22]. Repetition is a perpetually continuous act of going around what does not cease to be said, even if it cannot be said. Freud, in his text on repetition, stated that the process of remembering necessarily stops at the point where it clashes against a traumatic point that cannot be brought into the recollected material. In other words, it can only occur up to the point where it clashes against the real, against a remnant of a traumatic affect, which cannot be remembered.

Following Freud's approach on the matter it can be said that, in the clinical sphere, when the repressed material cannot be brought to conscious remembrance by the patient, it appears (and

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19 'Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait deux temps dans ce que j'ai jamais enseigné, un temps qui serait centré sur le stade du miroir et sur l'imaginaire, et puis après [...] la découverte que j'aurais faite tout d'un coup du signifiant'. Lacan, Jacques. *Le séminaire X. L'angoisse*, Paris, Seuil, 2004. p. 40.

20 Cf. Ibid. p. 50.

21 Lacan, Jacques. *Des Noms-du-Père*, Paris, Seuil, 2005. p. 41.

22 Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, New York, W.W. Norton, 1981. p. 50.

reappears, on and on) under another shape, that of an unmotivated action, an *acting out*. 'We may say that the patient does not *remember* anything of what he has forgotten and repressed, but *acts* it out. He reproduces it not as a memory but as an action; he *repeats* it, without, of course, knowing that he is repeating it'[23].

Repetition, as the recurrent apparition of the bit of real, insofar as it is structurally linked to the phenomenon of the act (in its various forms), opens up a way for better comprehending Mishima's take on the body.

WRITING, BODY-BUILDING AND PASSAGE À L'ACTE

> Why is an act not mere behavior? Let us concentrate, for example, on an act that is unambiguous, the act of cutting open one's belly in certain conditions [...] – why do people do that? Because they think it annoys others, because, in the structure, it is an act that is done in honor of something. But wait. Let us not be precipitate until we know, and let us take note of this, that an act, a true act, always has an element of structure, by the fact of concerning a real that is not self-evidently caught up in it[24].

We have seen how image and language (imaginary and symbolic) give birth to a body that is no different from a fiction, based on which subjectivity works, and that there is an equally constitutive remnant (real) impossible to apprehend, which reappears, for instance, in acts of repetition. Nevertheless, in Mishima's case, in this phenomenon there is a complex turn of events. According to his biographers, Mishima's primarily acquired body was a weak, poor body, one which seemed to be identified with his own grandmother's in terms of sickness. This body was so invasively penetrated by words that, in order for it to exist as such, the two dimensions had to be split. And so, the author decides to escape from this prison (seen by the artist as a characteristic only of his own self), in at least two ways that correspond to the first two "movements" mentioned previously.

On the one hand, he attempts to make the Other's code his, and 'to press ahead loyally with the corrosive function of words and to make that [his] life's work'[25]. This can be seen in general terms as the task that any creator willingly, although not painlessly, undertakes. In the case of language, words (which to a certain extent must be universal in order to become a means for communication) are transformed by any author's action into a purely individual object. According to Mishima, a writer makes words his own thing, uses them for his own private purposes, perverts them, and in this perversion, he finds style[26]. 'As words become particularized, and as men begin – in however small a way – to use them in personal, arbitrary ways, so their transformation into art begins'[27]. Writing becomes for Mishima the instrument for his historization, his becoming a subject; he particularizes language and makes it his own thing, he creates a stage on which the body of his texts is his own. However, according to Mishima, words fail to become a 'true language', one that could reach the very core of the subject.

This gives way to the second movement. Here, he decides to build a new, ideal body over the old, loathed one. Mishima takes a classical notion of physical beauty and determines himself to fit into it. 'The muscles that I thus created were at one and the same time simple existence and works of art; they even, paradoxically, possessed a certain abstract nature... Their function was precisely opposite to that of words'[28] By approaching the ideal (an approach which can only be understood as an

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23 Freud, Sigmund. *Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through* (1914). S. E. XII, p. 150.

24 Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, op. cit. p. 50.

25 Mishima, Yukio. *Sun and Steel,* op. cit. p. 9.

26 Ibid. p. 30.

27 Ibid. p. 29.

28 Ibid.

asymptotic one, for the ideal is never fully reached), Mishima realizes that his body has become an abstract object, deprived of any particular characteristic, therefore, a universal work of art, another sort of performance in no way different from the fiction that words bring about. Although this movement corresponds to what Mishima calls 'Action', it only reaches the same impossibility of words. In other words, Mishima's attempt 'to find a language of the body', to place his body where words had been, ends up in failure, and that which could link both realms remains still unachieved.

The transformation that takes place for both words and body seems to be the only actual possibility for binding art and life. However, Mishima discovers that as he isolates and works with each of them, the gap between them keeps on growing larger. Thus, the conjunction between them could only happen through acceptance of their mutually exclusive contradiction. 'The embracing of a dual polarity within the self and the acceptance of contradiction and collision – such was my own blend of "art and action"'[29]. This acceptance, however, is far from taking the form of a quiet resignation. Quite on the contrary, Mishima states that only a *true* form of *action* could embody this acceptance.

Let us here, then, take a further step towards inquiring what action is and how it can be understood from a psychoanalytic point of view.

To better understand the three movements previously mentioned, let us go back to Lacan's three registers, this time from a different perspective. In his tenth seminar Lacan elaborated the notions of the scene and the world. The 'scene' is the locus where the subject as such appears, on stage, symbolized, historized. It is a framework constituted of both the imaginary and the symbolic, and delimits the frame in which the subject stages his own fantasy. 'All of the things in the world come on stage according to the laws of the signifier, laws that we could in no way take at first sight as homogeneous to those of the world'[30]. This structure, however, appears within the context of the 'world', which must necessarily be understood as belonging to the dimension of the real, where the subject cannot exist as such for there is nothing that can *speak* about him (that is to say, the subject can only appear as such on a stage, as a speaking being).

Lacan's take on the scene seems to bear a striking resemblance to a function of body and mind which Mishima calls the 'false order'. For Mishima, both mind and body share what he calls 'the tendency to instantly create their own small universe, their own false order'. 'This function of the body and mind in creating for a short while their own miniature universes is, in fact, no more than an illusion; yet the fleeting sense of happiness in human life owes much to precisely this type of "false order". It is a kind of protective function of life in face of the chaos around it'[31]. This 'false order' shares with Lacan's 'stage' the condition of being no more than an ephemeral fantasy, and yet, it is precisely this fantasy what gives the subject a place to stand firmly in the middle of the wasteland that is the "world".

In *Sun and Steel*, Mishima introduces the idea of 'false order' in order to reveal the reasons behind his beginning to train and develop his body. 'The possibility then presented itself of breaking down one type of 'false order' and creating another in its place'[32]. If words were no more than an ephemeral fantasy, then they could be as easily replaced by another one, in this case, one belonging to the physical sphere.

In this fictional realm called the scene, *acting out* takes place, a concept whose origin must be traced back to the clinical context. As mentioned above, acting out refers to repressed material that reappears in analysis, not under the shape of a remembrance but as an unmotivated action. In Lacanian terms, the return of the repressed occurs when that which did not come to light in the symbolic appears in the real. Acting out is yet another phenomenon of reappearance in the real, but in this case the subject does not suffer from this return, but rather performs it, acts it out; some truth speaks through the subject himself who ignores the message he is conveying through his action.

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[29] Ibid. p. 49.

[30] Lacan, Jacques. *L'angoisse*, op. cit. p. 43. (Translation from French is mine).

[31] Mishima, Yukio. *Sun and Steel*, op. cit. pp. 24-25.

[32] Ibid. p. 25.

For acting out to occur, two elements are indispensable: a stage and an Other, to whom it is addressed. In Mishima's case it is quite clear that the set-up of the stage is carried out by means of performing what he called 'the action' (present, as we have concluded, both in his literature as well as in the creation and consequent exhibition of his built-up body. 'When at last I came to own such a body, I wanted to display it to everyone, to show it off and let it move in front of every eye'[33]). And yet, although this performative element is clearly close to acting out's scenic component, it is not possible to affirm that any performance is a significant acting out. Let us say, for now, that Mishima's bodybuilding and his literature, and also his constant theatrical performances, as well as his narcissistic pictures, are a sort of *staged* acting out. Now, in what concerns the Other, it is quite clear that Mishima built not only the stage on which to perform, and the characters that enter the scene, but he has even managed to build an Other, customized to fit his needs[34]. It might be possible to say, however, that the 'real action' is not contained in this theory of action Mishima proclaims as 'pure', for this action is nothing but a carefully staged sort of acting out.

However, another relation can be set up in relation with this 'scene'. When the subject does not *perform* but rather *escape*, when he lets himself fall from the scene, *passage à l'acte* takes place. *Passage à l'acte* is a jumping from the scene and into the world, where symbolization is lost. It is a radical movement, in which the subject drops what he has built on the scene and runs away from the field of signification onto the more radical sphere of the real. Certainly, the subject involved in such a confrontation, does not come out of it unmodified. It is from this perspective that Lacan's following statement should be taken into consideration: 'from a true act the subject emerges different [...] its structure is modified'[35].

Perhaps, it is something close to a *passage à l'acte* what Mishima carries out in the third of the movements we have referred to. Is it not there, then, where Mishima's true theory of action should be looked for?

If, as Mishima says, true body (as opposed to the ideal one) can only be achieved through a true action, that is to say, an action which reveals the nature of the body, it becomes clear that this action is radically different from any staged form of acting out; it is rather an action that renounces signification and aims at the heart of the unspeakable. Now, this "true nature of the body" cannot but remind us of that inapprehensible remain of the real we mentioned before: body's true nature cannot be seized within the framework of the bodily image, since this image is already a construction built upon a fragmented nature. Thus, in order to grasp the essence of the body, body itself must be torn apart.

Mishima states this in clearer words, by making use of a metaphor.

> *The antinomy between seeing and existing is decisive, since it involves the question of how the core of the apple can be seen through the ordinary, red, opaque skin [...] Let us picture a single, healthy apple. This apple was not called into existence by words, nor is it possible that the core should be visible from the outside [...] The apple certainly exists, but to the core this existence as yet seems inadequate; if words cannot endorse it, then the only way to endorse it is with the eyes [...] There is only one method of solving this contradiction. It is for a knife to be plunged deep into the apple so that it is split open and the core is exposed to the light...Yet then the existence of the cut apple falls into fragments'*[36].

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33 Stokes, Henry Scott. *Life and Death of Yukio Mishima,* op. cit. pp. 184.

34 This introduces the problem of Mishima's supposed devotion to the figure of the Emperor, and the motif of his suicide as a patriotic, nationalistic act of love for the Emperor himself. However, this is a topic that requires further and closer consideration and will thus not be dealt with here.

35 Lacan, Jacques. *Le séminaire XIV, La logique du fantasme.* Unpublished. Class of February 22, 1967. Translation from French is mine.

36 Mishima, Yukio. *Sun and Steel*, op. cit. p. 65.

This is the nucleus of Mishima's theory of the body.

Here a conclusion can be drawn: For Mishima, a perfect body is not just one that is displayed to be seen, but rather one that also manages to exhibit its core, what is irrepresentable, the real. By committing suicide, Mishima is jumping off the scene he had carefully built trough time; he is finally achieving the goal of becoming completely free from words. However, through this *passage à l'acte* there is no possible subject who could remain. At it, language ceases and only a letter remains: the one he wrote on his own stomach at the moment of dying.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 77-82

Ian McEwan, On Chesil Beach: "There is no sexual relation"

NANCY BLAKE[*]

The year is 1962, the scene is the honeymoon suite in a Georgian inn on Chesil Beach, a British seaside resort where a couple of newly-wed twenty-two year olds, recent University graduates, are fast approaching the greatest test of their lives:

> They were young, educated, and both virgins on this, their wedding night, and they lived in a time when conversation about sexual difficulties was plainly impossible. But it is never easy (3).

On Chesil Beach is the seventeenth book published by one of Britain's most prominent prose writers, Ian McEwan, a novelist whose early reputation owed a good deal to scandal: he was considered "the sick delinquent confrère of Genet, Burroughs, and Céline" (Ryan, 4).

Readers will not find this latest fiction sick, however, just sad and somehow uncomfortably true. Florence and Edward are both virgins, both innocent and very much ashamed of their lack of knowledge. Edward can not bring himself to confess the fact that he has no experience, while Florence pretends to flirt as she hides the fact that the very thought of sexual activity terrifies her. McEwan's point is that in this not so far away era, pre sexual revolution and pre feminism, the words to express their predicament are lacking for these highly educated young adults. Today however, at the date of publication, the situation is just the opposite, not only for the psychoanalytically informed, not only for readers of Foucault, but also for the viewer of Oprah or Dr. Phil. The difference in our attitude toward talking about sex should make the premises of *On Chesil Beach* rather anachronistic. That the novel is still compelling then, suggests that something is at stake which merits a closer inspection.

From the first paragraph of this very short novel, we have an indication of Florence's superior knowledge and a hint of the dubious import of its source. The newlyweds appear on their wedding night as they are served supper in the "honeymoon suite" of a Georgian inn on Chesil Beach.

> Edward did not mention that he had never stayed in a hotel before, whereas Florence, after many trips as a child with her father, was an old hand (3).

The information looks harmless enough at this juncture, yet very soon the status of this "old hand" will be put into question.

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Both Edward and Florence are deeply apprehensive about their coming trial.

> His specific worry, based on one unfortunate experience, was of over-excitement, of what he had heard someone describe as 'arriving too soon'. The matter was rarely out of his thoughts, but though his fear of failure was great, his eagerness – for rapture, for resolution – was far greater (7).

For both Edward and Florence the unmentionable is not just restricted to their personal inexperience and misgivings concerning sexuality. His unspoken reality includes a mother who is brain-damaged and severely incapacitated for whom his father and her children have always maintained a difficult charade in which they pretend that she lives an ordinary life as mother and wife.

For Florence, on the other hand, the problem is graver, and all the more so since it resists the recourse to language: "[W]hat troubled her was unutterable, and she could barely frame it for herself" (7).

McEwan excels at rendering the phobic recoil of Florence who fights down bouts of nausea whenever she is reminded of the realities of sexualized bodies: "[T]he idea of being touched 'down there' by someone else, even someone she loved, was as repulsive as, say, a surgical procedure on her eye" (8).

In this context, what are we to make of Edward's attraction to the "great man" theory of history in spite of the fact that it had gone out of fashion to believe that forceful individuals could shape national destiny? He was stubborn enough to write a senior thesis going against the notion of "History" with a capital being driven by inevitable and necessary ends which would soon be understood as a science. His study of exceptional individuals seems to him to prove exactly the contrary and he sticks to it, even projecting, after graduation, to write a series of short biographies of secondary 'great men'.

Perhaps a link could be established between Edward's vision of history as shaped by strong men and his own recent self image as a barroom brawler. The section which recounts his last fight during college shows him as acting in a sort of animal or instinctual daze as he prepares to chastise the Soho rocker who has insulted his intellectual friend. The friend's surprising reaction teaches Edward a lesson. "Street fighting did not go with poetry and irony, bebop or history. He was guilty of a lapse of taste. He was not the person he had thought" (95). Thus Edward's inability, his fear of acting according to instinct on his wedding night is somehow a function of his having learned that what is expected of him is *not* what comes naturally.

For Florence, on the other hand, there is a sense of insufficiency and even of guilt attached to her inability to feel sexual desire. As Edward undresses she seems to be miles away and, in fact, she is.

> Here came the past anyway, the indistinct past. It was the smell of the sea that summoned it. She was twelve years old, lying still like this, waiting, shivering in the narrow bunk with polished mahogany sides. Her mind was a blank, she felt she was in disgrace. After a two-day crossing, they were once more in the calm of Carteret harbour, south of Cherbourg. It was late in the evening, and her father was moving about the dim cramped cabin, undressing, like Edward now. She remembered the rustle of clothes, the clink of a belt unfastened or of keys or loose change. Her only task was to keep her eyes closed and to think of a tune she liked. Or any tune. She remembered the sweet scent of almost rotten food in the closed air of a boat after a rough trip. She was usually sick many times on the crossing, and of no use to her father as a sailor, and that surely was the source of her shame (99-100).

There could, of course, be other sources of her shame. A little later when Edward has ejaculated immediately as soon as she touches his penis, Florence feels guilty and is convinced that the catastrophe is all her fault. Here a mysterious phrase is interjected: "And there was another element, far worse in its way and quite beyond her control, summoning memories she had long ago decided were not really hers" (105). What are these repressed and repudiated memories? The

sensation of the semen on her skin and especially its smell, "dragged with it the stench of a shameful secret locked in musty confinement – she could not help herself, she had to be rid of it" (106).

If in the case of Edward, the novel invites us to ponder his relation to the castration complex in his fixation on the great man theory of history and his own propensity to brawl outside of pubs, in the case of his new bride Florence, the problem may well stem from her relationship to her hyper competitive, businessman father. "As far as Edward could tell, father and daughter rarely spoke, except in company, and then inconsequentially. He thought they were intensely aware of each other, though [...]. Ponting was always putting his arm around Ruth's shoulders, but he never, in Edward's sight, embraced her big sister" (115). Florence's father seems to be very excited at the news of the engagement. "It crossed Edward's mind, barely seriously, that he was rather too keen to give his daughter away" (115).

To make matters even worse, Florence cannot confide in her mother, an Oxford don who teaches philosophy and has no ear for music. After her revulsion at the sight of Edward's ejaculation, Florence flees to the beach and there she has a desire to feel the warmth of a mother's embrace: "This was how an infant might be, securely nestling in the crook of its mother's arm, though Florence did not believe she could ever have nestled against Violet, whose arms were thin and tense from writing and thinking" (141).

To some readers, less prompt to empathize with squeamish Florence, the total misunderstanding between the young lovers must seem humorous. As the bride realizes that this dreaded moment of sexual revelation is what marriage is all about she thinks she is really going to be sick. "When he heard her moan, Edward knew that his happiness was almost complete" (30). Edward mistakes his new wife's gagging nausea for the betrayal of ecstasy. But his ideas are never his own; he holds many of the views of his peers, for example that girls want to have sex but hold out for marriage. Edward's university friends who succeed in having sex pay dearly for it by dropping out of school in their second year. "The Pill was a rumor in the newspapers, a ridiculous promise, another of those tall tales about America" (39). The blues music that Edward listens to in London clubs during his years at university assures him that men his age are explosive sexual beings, while his experience tells him that he and his friends can only tell dirty jokes and drink too much further reducing their chances of meeting a girl.

> There were rumours that in the English department [...], men and women in tight black jeans and black polo-neck sweaters had constant easy sex, without having to meet each other's parents" (40).

Edward's interest, as an historian, is in apocalyptic cults, his fascination lies with these regular bouts of unreason in human existence. He hesitates, wondering whether to apply for a doctorate to continue studying this medieval madness.

On the other hand, Florence's mother is an Oxford philosopher. "She had never kissed or embraced Florence, even when she was small. Violet had barely ever touched her daughter at all. Perhaps it was just as well. She was thin and boney, and Florence was not exactly pining for her caresses. And it was too late to start now" (55).

For Florence, falling in love with Edward is the means to a discovery about herself. Although being loved is a source of narcissistic gratification and Edward's love flatters her, it also reveals something lacking:

> [...] she was really the one who was missing from the room. Falling in love was revealing to her just how odd she was, how habitually sealed off in her everyday thoughts. Whenever Edward asked, How do you feel? Or, What are you thinking? She always made an awkward answer. Had it taken her this long to discover that she lacked some simple mental trick that everyone else had, a mechanism so ordinary that no one ever mentioned it, an immediate sensual connection to people and events, and to her own needs and desires? All these years she had lived in isolation within herself and, strangely, from herself, never wanting or daring to look back (61).

Edward, on the other hand, also suffers from a sense of isolation which is perhaps in part attributable to the fictional universe in which he grew up ever since the accident that damaged his mother's brain when he was five years old. While Edward's father, the headmaster of a primary school, assumes all of the household tasks, the family persists in pretending that their mother is actually a normal person, thanking her every evening for the dinner which she has had no hand in preparing.

During his seminars of the 6os and 70s, Jacques Lacan repeated a mantra which could find its illustration some forty years later, in McEwan's novel: "There is no sexual relation". In part, at least, this seemingly paradoxical statement echoes Lacan's earlier pronouncements concerning man as a creature, not of nature, but of language, the Symbolic order. In *Seminar XI*, he says for example:

> [...] I told you that the human being has always to learn from scratch from the other what he has to do, as man or as woman. I referred to the old woman in the story of Daphnis and Chloe, which shows us that there is an ultimate field, the field of sexual fulfillment, in which, in the last resort, the innocent does not know the way, Jacques Lacan (*Sem XI*, 27 May 1964).
>
> What I am saying, following Freud, who provides abundant evidence of it, is that this function [reproduction], is not represented as such in the psyche. In the psyche, there is nothing by which the subject may situate himself as a male or female being.
>
> [...] the ways of what one must do as man or as woman are entirely abandoned to the drama, to the scenario, which is placed in the field of the Other – which, strictly speaking, is the Oedipus complex.
>
> Sexuality is established in the field of the subject by a way that is that of lack, p. 204.

Lacan comes back to these matters in the opening to *Seminar XXIII*, the Joyce seminar, where he repeats that "man stands apart from what seems to be the law of nature, in that, there is not, for him, any natural sexual relation." (12)

In these views, Lacan is entirely faithful to one of the cornerstone discoveries of the Freudian revolution, namely the distinction which Freud would always maintain, between an animal *Instinkt*, where a preformed object of sexual desire exists, and the human *Trieb*, where the object and its discovery is accidental and variable. As Laplanche and Pontalis point out, human sexuality is, in some sense, intrinsically perverse insofar as it only "leans on" the self-preservative instinct and therefore inevitably overshoots the requirements of mere biological existence.

One of the reasons for this is amply illustrated in Ian McEwan's novel: there is no equality in the matter of gender identity. If Lacan says that woman is a symptom for man, the reverse cannot be the case. So, then, what is a man for woman? Whatever you like, says Lacan, perhaps a ravage, havoc. This inequality is a result of a different relationship to the castration complex for each of the two sexes.

This structural dissymmetry between the sexes is something that I have studied in other contexts, my interest in this example drawn from Ian McEwan's novel is centered on the essential Lacanian notion of *méconnaissance*; misrecognition.

In an interview with Bryon Appleyard in *Timesonline* of March 25, 2007, McEwan notes:

> People who are psychotic or autistic can't read other minds. They might be frighteningly logical, but they have no emotional commitment.

He then contrasts the artist and the terrorist. In relation to his interest in the post 9/11 world and his novel *Saturday*, McEwan notes that novelists imagine their way into other minds. Terrorists are incapable of doing so, or else they refuse that possibility. "Extreme cruelty", says McEwan, "is a failure of the imagination".

The failure of empathy is then a central focus of interest for McEwan. In his latest novel, he examines that failure in the context of the breakdown of the symbolic order. In an interview with Mike Collett-White entitled "Complete Surrender" in *Reuters,* speaking of his own personal discovery that he had an older brother and that this child had been given up for adoption by his parents before their marriage says:

> "I don't think it affects my opinion, but I certainly have regrets that they went to their graves feeling they couldn't discuss these things. [...]
>
> They couldn't talk about it even when it was long in the past, which suggests to me it must have still bothered them. [...]

When his brother, who knew he was adopted, succeeded in discovering the identity of his parents, he introduced himself to McEwan, but it was too late for reconciliation with the parents. His father was dead and although McEwan took him to the nursing home where his mother was cared for, she was too far sunken into dementia to recognize the son she had surrendered.

> "I don't feel harshly judgmental", says McEwan. "One has to have lived through war or be immersed in the social attitudes of the time to understand".

That which cannot be spoken is the motor of the drama in *On Chesil Beach*. The first sentence reads, "They were young, educated, and both virgins on this, their wedding night, and they lived in a time when a conversation about sexual difficulties was plainly impossible". That which can not be discussed is a source of shame, because the subject knows him/herself to be lacking. In the love relationship of the couple each is constituted by the other as the 'subject supposed to know'.

Lacan: "Who does not know from experience that it is possible not to want to ejaculate? Who does not know from experience, knowing the recoil imposed on everyone, in so far as it involves terrible promises, by the approach of *jouissance* as such? Who does not know that one may not wish to think? – the entire universal college of professors is there as evidence.

But what does not wanting to desire mean? The whole of analytic experience – which merely gives form to what is for each individual at the very root of his experience – shows us that not to want to desire and to desire are the same thing" (*Seminar XI*, p. 235 10 June 1964).

Then, in response to a question from M. Safouan on the difference between the object in the drive and the object in desire – Lacan responds that there are a lot of very pleasant things that we think we desire, in as much as we are healthy, but all we can say about them is this – we think we desire them. This has nothing to do with psycho-analysis. The objects that are in the field of *Lust*, on the other hand, have so "fundamentally narcissistic a relation with the subject that in the last resort the mystery of the supposed regression of love in identification has its reason in the symmetry of these two fields, which I have designated as *Lust* and *Lust-Ich*. What one cannot keep outside, one always keeps an image of inside. Identification with the object of love is as silly as that" (p. 243, 10 June 1964).

Read in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, chapters on Identification and Hypnosis and the State of being in Love.

Aphanisis is an important concept in Lacanian psychoanalysis (cf. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*). Although he credits Ernest Jones with coining the term, Lacan appropriated and altered its meaning quite substantially. In Lacanian theory, aphanisis describes the process through which a subject is eclipsed behind any signifier which has come to represent him/her. The subject as such is, accordingly, barred, a mere interstice, while the signifier reigns supreme. Barred and riven by the Other (of language), a subject has no choice but to conceive of herself *vis-a-vis* something other than herself, something 'outside' or radically separated from her. In this very process of conceiving of herself, of making herself thinkable, and thus communicable, a subject accomplishes her own radical alienation. And note here, that in McEwan's fiction, Florence who is a violinist and leads a classical string quartet will go on, after the annulment of the marriage to illustrate this Lacanian vision of radical alienation. Lacan's reflections go beyond concerns with impotence, frigidity and sexual functioning in general. Because the Other is the sole means through which a 'subject' can be rendered conceivable, aphanisis, the disappearance or the fading of the subject behind any signifier used to think it, is an essential concept for understanding subjectivity and the threat of the subject's fundamental emptiness.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 83-89

"John Wayne wouldn't like gay cowboys": Ang Lee's Western *Brokeback Mountain* and the genre tradition

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Although an early favorite to win the Academy Award for Best Picture, Ang Lee's Western *Brokeback Mountain* failed to do so in March of 2006. However, at least the director was awarded an Oscar for his achievement. Ang Lee has not been an unknown entity in the film industry for quite some time, as two of his films already managed to win the Golden Bear at the Berlin Film Festival. And ever since 1995 the Taiwanese director has been making films within the context of the American Independent Cinema as well as the Hollywood Cinema. These films appear quite distinctive at first sight, their stupendous range veering from the Jane Austen adaptation *Sense and Sensibility* to an international co-production like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (which became the most successful US release of a foreign film up to then) to the comic adaptation *Hulk*. However, despite these differences there are also similarities to be found, as the topics *Brokeback Mountain* deals with are already to be found in previous Ang Lee films. For instance, his second film *The Wedding Banquet*, made back in 1993, deals with a gay subject matter in the story of a homosexual Taiwanese man who agrees to a marriage of convenience due to the pressure of his parents. And the Western film genre has also already been covered by Ang Lee in *Ride with the Devil*, focusing on the negotiations of race and gender issues therein.

As already noted, *Brokeback Mountain* did not win the Oscar for Best Picture in early 2006, having been beaten by Paul Haggis' episodic drama *Crash*. A decision that was also heavily discussed in the American Press, for the Oscar was not awarded to the fearlessly told gay love-story, but to the dark kaleidoscope about racism in Los Angeles. Ty Burr, film critic of the Boston Globe, called the defeat of *Brokeback Mountain* "one of the most stunning upsets in Oscar history". His colleague Wesley Morris even concluded: "The memo from Hollywood seems clear enough. Better to reward the movie about people who clean our closets than the one about the men who live in them". And Kenneth Turan surmised in the Los Angeles Times:

> You could not take the pulse of the industry without realizing that this film made a number of people distinctly uncomfortable. [...] In the privacy of the voting booth, as many political candidates who've led in polls only to lose elections have found out, people are free to act out

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> the unspoken fears and unconscious prejudices that they would never breathe to another soul, or, likely, acknowledge to themselves. And at least this year, that acting out doomed *Brokeback Mountain*.

The gist of most of these articles was that *Crash* may undoubtedly be an important and quite good film; however, the Academy may have made the safe, non-controversial decision in choosing *Crash* over *Brokeback Mountain*.

An entire string of theories was put up as to why *Brokeback Mountain* as an early favorite to win the Oscar for Best Picture was overtaken by *Crash* in the final spurt; at least three of them may be presented here. One theory argues that maybe the hype surrounding *Brokeback Mountain* was badly timed; the eligible members of the Academy may have been fed up by the media attention and the film itself by the time of casting the vote – and may have opted for *Crash* instead, a film that had been in the running with far less obtrusive media presence.

It was also assumed that *Crash* as a definite actor's film, given its huge cast, and shot in Los Angeles, which makes it very much a *hometown movie* about L.A., must have appealed to the eligible members, most of whom are actors who also to a great extent live in and around Los Angeles, in Pasadena, Burbank, North Hollywood, Pacific Palisades and Brentwood.

And last but not least, probably still the most significant explanation for the ‹collapse› of *Brokeback Mountain* on the home stretch being: Ang Lee's film presents an unconcealed homosexual love story embedded within the classical setting of a Western. This might have been met by the eligible Academy members – as already indicated by the introductory quotes – with irritation and discomfort. *Brokeback Mountain* is said to have contaminated the most American of all genres, the Western, with its particularly virile heroes, through a gay love-story; the Academy is said to have reacted allergically to that. There are numerous examples for this ‹allergy› to be found. Matt Brunson, for instance, reports:

> Tony Curtis, now 80 years old, doubtless spoke for this vast voting bloc when, during an interview with FOX News, he stated that he had no intention of watching *Brokeback Mountain* and that he knew most of his friends in the Academy also had no plans to pop the screener into the DVD player. He objected to the idea of gay cowboys (‹Howard Hughes and John Wayne wouldn't like it›), and this strain of intolerance is especially disappointing since it comes from a man who starred in that classic cross-dressing comedy *Some Like It Hot*. (For the record, Curtis' favorite movie of 2005 was *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*). And Entertainment Weekly quoted 89-year-old Ernest Borgnine as saying, ‹I didn't see it and I don't care to see it... If John Wayne were alive, he'd be rolling over in his grave.› Forget Borgnine's muddied thinking for a moment (if Wayne were alive, he wouldn't be in a grave suitable for rolling): This time around at least, it appears Curtis and Borgnine – two presently irrelevant actors hardly typical of the current Hollywood scene though probably typical of Academy membership – are the organization's poster boys.

Continuing the tradition of classics like *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* which preach *racial tolerance*, *Crash* was therefore on hand as a politically correct, liberal alternative to *Brokeback Mountain*.

In the following, I am interested in the argument found in many reviews that *Brokeback Mountain* continues the tradition of the classical Western and implements this tradition with a love story between men. My thesis is that the achievement of *Brokeback Mountain* is not so much a supplementary one, that is, adding a homosexual subject matter to the genre, but an analytical one: The achievement of *Brokeback Mountain* lies in pointing out that negotiations of homosexuality have always been constitutive to the Western genre; it's almost impossible to unearth a Western that succeeds eschewing something one could refer to as homosexual, homoerotic subtext. *Brokeback Mountain* performs a reconfiguration: text and subtext are being interchanged with one another. Having always organized the Western genre, but hidden from view, homoerotic, homosexual configurations are now openly negotiated; the traditional subtext becomes text.

Thus Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* is not primarily important for the history of the Western genre because of its significant rewriting of the genre, but rather for the possibility it creates for us to take a retrospective, less disguised view on the fact that negotiations of homosexuality, of homoeroticism, of homosociality have always been essential to the Western and in what way; Ang Lee's film allows us a re-reading of the genre. The most American of all genres, concerned with the production and depiction of heroic manhood, reveals itself as a genre that despite its claim to the sexually straight virility of its protagonists has always been dealing with the very thing that threatens this straightness. The straightness of the Westerner has always been threatened by a predicament into which theories on the construction of filmic spectatorship thrust the genre.

SPECTATORSHIP IN THE WESTERN: *LOOK, BUT DON'T LOOK*

> Laura Mulvey has noted the gendered construction of bodies through filmic spectatorship as early as 1975 in her highly influential essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Mulvey combines the findings of the feminist debate with the approaches of the psychoanalytically grounded apparatus theory and expresses a radical criticism of the filmic apparatus by arguing that the female object of the male gaze implemented into the whole arrangement of narrative cinema is to be seen as a repetition and stabilizing of patriarchal structures[1].

What Mulvey terms as the basic theoretical principle of the filmic gaze in Hollywood cinema is something that art historians like John Berger have described as a cultural principle ever since the ancient age: *Men look. Women are looked upon.* Be that as it may, as a medium concerned with the representation of the corporeal, the cinema has also always been exhibiting heterosexual male bodies; however, in the Western, not without reason regarded as the most male genre there is, female characters only appear on the margins. The Western is a male genre: Directed by male directors and predominantly addressed to a male audience, the camera focuses on male protagonists (just the mere existence of female characters in the Western has been repeatedly described as "disturbing" or "superfluous"). So if the Western is predominantly interested in male characters, and if the camera focuses on male bodies and thereby turns them into objects of the filmic gaze, this objectification moves the male body into the vicinity of the female body, which especially in a male genre may elicit homoerotic connotations. The evident obsession of the genre for the display of the Westerner's attractiveness appears curious in a perspective informed by gender theory, as quite precisely noted by Lee Clark Mitchell in *Westerns. Making the Man in Fiction and Film*: "Given such consensus about the male gaze and the female body, it may seem odd that the Western so obviously celebrates the male body, as if that tall, handsome, bright-eyed, broad-shouldered figure who rides through our national dream represented some radical inversion of the stereotype"[2].

By focusing on the protagonists, the camera celebrates *the spectacle of masculinity*. This aestheticisation of the male corporeal is realized in connection with dueling or fighting scenes. This structural connection to the moment of violence allows for both the gaze to fall on the male body as an excuse to capture the scenic action, and for the fighting scenes to punish the man who displays himself, as much as his opponent and – according to the brutality of the physical conflict – even the spectator. Both aspects serve to repress the homoerotic gaze. Mitchell has fittingly termed this *double bind* of exposing the attractive body of the Westerner, who is displayed to the gazes, while simultaneously trying to conceal this state of display, as "this bizarre 'look-but-don't-look' experience"[3].

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1 Sandra Rausch (2003): Männer darstellen/herstellen. Zur Inszenierung des männlichen Körpers im Hollywood Genre Film. Eine Fallstudie, Magisterarbeit Köln. Tr. Asokan Nirmalarajah, pp. 41-42.

2 Lee Clark Mitchell (1996): Westerns. Making the Man in Fiction and Film, Chicago: Chicago UP, p. 161.

3 *Ibid*., p. 160.

Brokeback Mountain now picks up on this *look-but-don't-look*-pattern of the Western, but allows the desire to look overpower the prohibition to look: During their first summer on the Brokeback Mountain, we see Ennis and Jack exchanging furtive looks with one another. The protagonists on screen thus introduce the film spectator into the field of gazes which the film sets free: the desiring homoerotic view onto the male body. In opposition to the specifications of the genre, these heroes sometimes do away with their clothes. In the traditional Western, the careful dressing of the Westerner serves to distract from all too obvious eroticism. "[T]he cowboy's elaborate sign-laden costume permits the eye to roam across the male body without seeming to focus on that body as flesh [...], invites and deflects our gaze, doing so in a characteristic moment of oscillation, of nervous distortion that seems ever attached to the scandal of aimlessly gazing at men"[4]. *Brokeback Mountain* allows this focus "on that body as flesh"; Ennis looks at the undressed Jack, Jack looks at the undressed Ennis. Both strip off the clothing of the Westerner, which in the tradition of the genre seems almost to be grown together with the bodies of the protagonists, who always sleep in their clothes with their hats pulled into their faces, and who also do not seem to take them off at any other opportunity. Jack becomes a kind of Susanna from the *Book of Daniel*, on whom the desiring gaze of Ennis falls, and vice versa. Love irrupts between Ennis and Jack on Brokeback Mountain like a force of nature (the tagline of Ang Lee's Western reads: *Love is a force of nature*); and until the gloomy ending the love between the two men stays bound up with Brokeback Mountain – even a brief summary of the film's story makes this apparent.

The film begins in Wyoming in the year of 1963, in a rural ambience. In front of the trailer of a shepherd, Joe Aguirre (Randy Quaid), rancher Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) and rodeo cowboy Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) meet each other for the first time. Aguirre hires them to guard a herd of sheep against poachers and wild animals during the summer months on Brokeback Mountain. Both men, tight-lipped Ennis and extroverted Jack grow closer during their shared time in the seclusion of the mountain area, fall in love with one another, have sex and go on meeting each other afterwards – although both of them also get married to women. Jack, especially, suffers from the rare meetings with Ennis, takes trips to Mexico to pick up street hustlers, gigolos, and starts an affair with a neighbor. Eventually, he falls victim to a homophobic assault and is tortured to death. (At least that's what we see in brief images cut into the scene in which Ennis talks to Jack's widow on the phone and she informs him of an accident; it is not completely unlikely that these images spring from Ennis' mind, for he is particularly fearful of homophobic violence). Ennis is left with nothing but a postcard picturing Brokeback Mountain and a bloodstained shirt of Jack which he hangs with one of his own shirts in his closet. Metonymically, both heroes are brought together in this final image of the film – however, only "in the closet" – and the "closet-structure" was the very thing which structured their relationship: Brokeback Mountain was their *closet* – and it was their heterotopia.

THE HETEROTOPIA OF HOMOSEXUALITY

The concept of heterotopia, which is useful in describing Brokeback Mountain, we owe to Michel Foucault: he notes that there

> are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias[5].

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4 *Ibid*., p. 165.

5 Michel Foucault (1986). Of Other Spaces [1967]. In *Diacritics* (16:1, Spring, pp. 22-27). Tr. Jay Miskowiec, p. 24.

These heterotopias are thought to be

> linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. This situation shows us that the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the loss of life, and with this quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance[6].

Brokeback Mountain fits the criteria put up by Foucault. It is a space that exists (and is not to be found in the nowhere of utopia), and as Foucault states, is a "counter-site", a "kind of effectively enacted utopia" – a space into which Ennis and Jack repeatedly break out, and which appears to make time stand still, allowing them year by year, even decade by decade to immerse themselves into the timelessness and even "eternity" of their love.

In internet forums discussing the film as well as in reviews, a strong case has been made for the restriction and latent violence of the heteronormative system as the most obvious reasons for the hindrance and destruction of the love between the two cowboys – a charge which deserves acknowledgement and sympathy. Naturally, every claim for the right of *all* social groups – not only heterosexuals – to live according to their own liking without fear of sanctions is justified (and *Brokeback Mountain* supports this in its stirring filmic form). However, the relationship between the dominant heterosexual system and the homosexual heterotopia of Brokeback Mountain is not sufficiently covered by the lament over the restrictions of heteronormativity: a further perspective is necessary. The love between Ennis and Jack is so powerful, so intense, *because* it is a forbidden, an impossible, a threatened love; the heteronormative restriction hinders – looked at it this way – not the constitution of Jack and Ennis as lovers who stand tall against a social order, but in a way creates this couple in the first place. Ang Lee, adapting a short story by Annie Proulx, modifies in his way the formula for all love stories, if we can speak of *one* formula for all love stories, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. While in Shakespeare the feuding families are the ones who prevent the lovers from uniting *to live happily ever after*, in *Brokeback Mountain* the restrictive heteronormative society fills this role for Jack and Ennis by blocking the possibility of a shared life for them. The love between Jack and Ennis is threatened, very much like the love between Romeo and Juliet, and possibly the love between all great romantic couples, by death. For it is death with its semi-metaphysical, transcendental aspect which stands for the absolute and exclusiveness of romantic love. In so far, every notion of romantic love that sees itself as 'absolute' (and romantic love is traditionally always thought of as absolute) is destined for death. The emotional intensity of the relationship between Jack and Ennis, which stands the test of time, also owes its existence to this opposition to everything that is permissible and possible. Of the two protagonists, of Jack and Ennis, only the former is able to imagine a shared life with Ennis; he yearns for togetherness. Ennis, however, cannot think of a possible shared future; he tells Jack at the very beginning of their relationship of a traumatic childhood memory, a backstory wound, which will always keep him from giving in to Jack's plans: "I tell ya, there... there were these two old guys ranched up together, down home. Earl and Rich. And they was the joke of town, even though they were pretty tough ol' birds. Anyway, they... they found Earl dead in an irrigation ditch. Took a tire iron to 'im. Spurred him up, drug him 'round by his dick 'till it pulled off". Jack asks: "You seen this?" To which Ennis answers: "I wasn't... nine years old. My daddy, he made sure me and brother see it. Hell, for all I know, he done the job".

The end of the film seems to confirm Ennis' assumption that homosexuality cannot be lived openly in rural America of the 60s and post-60s. Jack presumably dies, as mentioned before, as a victim of an especially violent homophobic assault; he becomes a postfiguration of Earl, of whom Ennis has told him earlier. But maybe this homophobic assault only really happens in the mind of Ennis, maybe it was really an accident which killed Jack. Regardless, it is Jack's death which brings

6 *Ibid*., p. 26.

the male arrangement between Jack and Ennis to an end – this arrangement to break out of the narrowness of their middle-class, heterosexual lives after long intervals of time and return over and over again to Brokeback Mountain, a semi-paradisical place with a grand natural backdrop, where they camp, drink whiskey, allegedly go fishing and can love each other, leaving behind the heterosexual restrictions and the boredom of everyday life.

This behavioural pattern is applicable to the Western ideology of the cowboy who travels out into nature, towards West, or into battle with Indians or bandits, not only to defend the social order, his and other families, women and children, but also to flee the familiar day-to-day-life. In so far, the most American of all Genres, the Western, has always been staging a precarious relationship to heterosexuality. The real Westerner is not married and will not marry; he keeps on travelling towards West as a *lonesome cowboy* and rides with a friend or with a group of *gunmen*.

The most American of all genres, concerned with the production and depiction of heroic manhood, reveals itself as a genre that despite its claim to the sexually *straight* virility of its protagonists has always been dealing with the very thing that endangers this *straightness*. Western films operate with homosocial configurations, with decidedly homosexual subtexts – and Ang Lee's terrific Western inscribes itself into this tradition, bringing its very foundation to the surface, and thereby distorting it to recognizability.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 91-95

"He had no place in it": D. H. Lawrence's oedipal complex and national character

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Lawrence wrote openly of his Oedipal feelings for his mother, and the wound her death caused when he was twenty-five years old. Indeed, the last page of his autobiographical novel, *Sons and Lovers*, lays out the painful emptiness that Paul Morel experiences several months after her death. "Everywhere the vastness and terror of the immense night which is roused and stirred for a brief while by the day, but which returns, and will remain at last eternal, holding everything in its silence and its living gloom. [...] She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone..." (464). Psychoanalyst Daniel A. Weiss writes, in his monograph, *Oedipus in Nottingham*, about not only the existence of Lawrence's Oedipal complex, but his failure to vanquish it through a life of writing, loving, and traveling. According to Weiss, in *Sons and Lovers*,

> the Oedipal situation prevails against Lawrence's attempts to direct it along enlightened lines... as a drama in which the son does *not* obtain possession of the mother and does *not* seek his father's death... What Lawrence does not take into account, is that the Oedipal situation is initiated by the son as his earliest attempt to establish himself in the family constellation (16).

According to Weiss, Lawrence will continue to compensate for that early Oedipal situation by attempting to subjugate women to men's desires, at least in his fiction, if not so successfully in his married life. Oliver Mellors, Lawrence's last protagonist, is a man for whom the complete submission of his lover is his only satisfaction (Weiss 108).

In a moment I will return to a close reading of the final scene of *Sons and Lovers,* in order to elucidate the key symptoms of loss that adumbrate the Oedipal complex; but here, I would like to mention that these same symptoms also recall other psychological concepts such as Julia Kristeva's description of the abject in her 1982 essay, *Powers of Horror*, and Freud's *Unheimliche* in his 1919 essay, *The Uncanny*. In his travel writings and novels, Lawrence repeatedly encounters what he calls a void, emptiness, terror, and meaninglessness. It is an experience of abjection that he first encounters upon the loss of his mother, and subsequently revisits in each of the places where he goes to escape the sensation. *Unheimliche* is the uncanny feeling of the familiar in the unfamiliar, and this is yet another psychoanalytic expression of the haunting that Lawrence cannot escape in his destinations, even amidst scenes and characters which he attempts to romanticize or domesticate.

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Freud said that the ultimate "place" of *Unheimliche* to a male with an unresolved complex is the female genitals, as they remind him of his place of origin. Weiss points out that late-Lawrence male protagonists are afraid of orgasms, unconsciously associating them with castration, and trying to prevent women from having them (108). From these descriptions, it appears that the unresolved Oedipal complex, the experience of the abject, and the uncanny are inextricably intertwined.

The following passage could be analyzed with all three psychoanalytical concepts; it is Lawrence's fictional rendering of the experience of maternal loss almost too monumental to bear, at the very end of *Sons and Lovers*:

> Beyond the town the country, little smouldering spots for more towns – the sea – the night – on and on! *And he had no place in it* [italics mine]. Whatever spot he stood on, there he stood alone. From his breast, from his mouth sprang the endless space – and it was there behind him, everywhere. The people hurrying along the streets offered no obstruction to the void in which he found himself. [...] There was no Time, only Space. Who could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place, and was in another, that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. [...] Where was he? – one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could not bear it. [...] himself, infinitesimal, at the core a nothingness, and yet not nothing" (464).

My theory is that the space that seems too empty to Paul Morel on the last page of *Sons and Lovers* will be the space that Lawrence attempts to fill in a lifetime of journeys, always looking to recreate the meaning that his mother gave to his life while she was alive. Lawrence frequently discusses "the spirit of place" as a belief in the quasi-anthropomorphic consciousness of places. I do not assert that this being is his mother's ghost, or even his memory of her love for him, but rather his experience of lost and irrecoverable meaning, at first a seductive feeling, but always tinged with sadness, sometimes with terror and incomprehension. In this paper, I will examine how Lawrence projects the Oedipal complex, the experience of abjection, and the uncanny upon two of the nations, Italy, and Australia, which he visits and tries consciously to adopt as new homelands. Both comically and seriously, Lawrence writes national character as an extension of his own self-analysis. What excuses such a habit, which could be obnoxious in another writer, is that Lawrence knows exactly what he is doing; in his most self-reflexive novel, *Kangaroo*, he tells the reader: "Poor Richard Lovat wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself, and calling it Australia" (33).

ITALY

I will treat Italy first, as it preceded Australia in Lawrence's lifetime itinerary. Italy was Lawrence's first great escape from the problem of himself. He traveled on foot over the Alps, with Frieda von Richtofen, his new life partner, in 1912, settling in the village of Gargnano on the shore of Lago di Garda in northern Italy. His book, *Twilight in Italy*, is a collection of essays that describe his encounter with the Other during this glorious year of new possibilities, consisting of new love, a new career of writing, and a new country that promised respite from the ugly, creeping industrialism and anxiety-producing modernity of England. Although Lawrence is mostly enchanted by living among peasants, whom he considers more contented than English people, by virtue of their "blood consciousness," still, he is haunted by something of his past that he portrays as something of Italy's past. Accordingly, the figures to whom he has the strongest cathexis are always men whom he perceives as lost and alone, though strong and determined in compensation. I will examine his reaction to these types to demonstrate the aporia – the unexplainable paradox – that Lawrence experiences in each encounter.

First, he encounters Il Duro, the Italian word for "The Hard," an expert vine grafter who works on the farm where the Lawrences stay. Lawrence is impressed by three things: first, Il Duro's merging

into the work, his "intimate communion" with the earth and vines; then, his refusal to marry; and finally, the quality of sadness he emits, despite, or maybe because of, the sense that he is hard as stone. Lawrence is both attracted and repelled by the solitariness and simplicity of the man, fearing the unknown complexities underneath. After pressing Il Duro for the reasons he refuses to marry, Lawrence comes up with his own theory: marriage is a union of the spirit, and this man has none; for him, "sensation itself was absolute" (116). At this point, Lawrence proclaims Il Duro absolutely impossible to understand. However, his attraction to the man may be accounted for in part by Lawrence's recollection of his father the miner, another man who seemed to content himself with a life of drinking and working. Freud said that "a symptom of a repressed Oedipal complex is that the cathexis of the boy's mother changes, through repression, into anxiety, and may later emerge attached to a substitute for the father" (777). Throughout his life, Lawrence experiences the kind of sexual fascination with tough, working men that Il Duro epitomizes. On the other hand, in Il Duro he also sees a loner, and he always identifies with the lone-wolf. After his mother's death, Lawrence was almost always in the company of others, but never able to shake the feeling of his own difference and aloneness. Finally, Il Duro represents a failure of Lawrence's quest in Italy, or an example of the *reductio ad absurdum* of his desire to live in the senses. In another chapter, he discusses the need for balance between spirit and senses, but in life, he rarely finds what he considers a good representative of that achieved balance. The opposite extremes of the Apollo/Dionysus split are always frightening to him.

The second group of figures upon whom Lawrence projects "the problem of himself" is the Italians in Exile in what Lawrence deems a "soulless Swiss village" (135). Thirty Italian families live there, working in a silk factory and convening every evening in the local inn to rehearse plays and discuss Anarchy. They have exiled themselves from Italy because they refuse to serve in the military. They proclaim they live well without government, which is how they perceive their lives as an ethnic enclave in a German- Swiss village. Lawrence is mightily attracted to their bit of warmth amongst the cold Swiss Germans. But, he is also repelled by the sacrifice they are willing to make in order not to serve. He cannot explain his sadness, though he does describe a disconnection in understanding them, much like he did with Il Duro. In this case, however, the reason is the reverse: he does not share their idealism, or as he puts it, "belief in the perfectibility of man." They represent to him the other side of the Il Duro coin: living too completely in the spirit, they deprive the senses of their beloved, sunny homeland. His reaction is extreme, clueing the reader to a personal complex about which he is unaware or inarticulate. He writes of their ringleader, Giuseppino, "I could feel a new spirit in him, something strange and pure and slightly frightening. He wanted something which was beyond me. And my soul was somewhere in tears, crying helplessly like an infant in the night. I could not respond" (144). The next day, he refuses to see them: "It was as if some curious negative magnetism arrested my mind, prevented it from working, the moment I turned towards these Italians" (147). The aporia here, though he proclaims not to understand it, is the question of how these simple Italians can be happy away from their homeland, when homeland means so much to them? And why would an abstract concept like Anarchy be sufficient for them to justify such exile? The first question relates to Lawrence's self-exile from his own homeland, a life-long exile which he begins on this journey with Frieda. Does he see in the displaced Italians the same desperation, the same pretence of fulfillment that he will experience in his own life? The second question pertains deeply to his personal fears as well; that is, though perceiving life as what he calls a "thought adventure," Lawrence is afraid of over-thinking, and particularly of abstractions and most of all, political ideologies, as we will see in the next section on *Kangaroo*. The pull of the world of thought and of social accomplishment is his mother's influence, but the sadness of that desire unfulfilled, as it was in her, is so potent when projected onto these anarchist Italian factory workers that Lawrence cannot even bear to think about them; his mind stops involuntarily at the recollection.

Another book set partly in Italy, *The Lost Girl*, offers a compelling example of the terror and emptiness that ripple through Lawrence's psyche. In this novel, which starts out unusually similarly in tone and theme to the classic social realist novel of Midlands England, Alvina Houghton, a young

lady from a respectable middle class family, after courting several eligible prospects, tosses them all for Cicio, an Italian vaudeville actor. At this point, the tone turns typically Lawrencean, as Alvina accompanies Cicio to his tiny, impoverished village in the Abruzzi region of southern Italy, to live in a primitive house with Cicio, his uncle, an ass, and some geese. Here, she encounters an alternately frightening and compelling spirit of place: "Black and cruel presences were in the under-air. They bewitched you with loveliness, and lurked with fangs to hurt you afterwards" (394). In addition to the menacing void outdoors, she also combats the strain of her marriage to a man who is nearly her opposite. Cicio reserves all intellectual talk for his cronies in the piazza, and turns to her for sexual and emotional substance. Indeed, for me one of the most realistic representations of human emptiness in the Lawrence canon is the final scene of this novel. When Italy enters World War I, Cicio prepares to be called, but dreads his death, and cannot believe in the possibility of survival. "I can't come back, I can't come back," he moans, until Alvina talks him into believing he will live through the war. There is a curious sense of homelessness in this Italian man, whose *campanilismo* – the Italians' characteristic love of their home town – is at odds with his wartime sense of doom. When Alvina finally convinces him he will come back from war, he only brightens by deciding they will move to America. As Alvina notes, his hearth is not his home: "when the true Italian came out in him, his veriest home was the piazza of Pescocalascio, ... where the roads met and men stood in groups and talked" (389). E. M. Forster makes the same observation of male Italians, that home may be their castle, but the piazza was the place of real comfort, the place of the *heimliche* feeling.

Home was very important to Lawrence. His early essays, novels, stories and poems speak to the comfort of the family hearth, centered on the mother's presence. In his life with Frieda, he was the more domestic of the two, waxing exuberant in letters about homey attributes of the series of rented houses that would constitute home for all the years of their lives together. He had to teach Frieda how to cook and clean; he enjoyed making their own furniture at Del Monte Ranch; he loved having company to dinner in his own home. In all three aforementioned Italian scenarios that inspired terror in him, the characters are in some sense homeless. Il Duro lives alone, and exudes loneliness beyond human comprehension. The Italians in Exile are putting on a good face to endure their sacrifice of home for their political beliefs, but Lawrence's projected fear of homelessness is so powerful as to literally shut down his brain when he tries to think of them. And Alvina has to create both hearth and home for Cicio, her Italian husband whose fear of the void is so great that she has to remind him that a powerful will to survive is the only thing we can offer against the contingencies of war. I believe that Lawrence found the emotional source for this scene from the recollection of his own desire for annihilation after his mother's death, as it is described in *Sons and Lovers*.

AUSTRALIA

Terror of the void continues, and takes on a different geographical manifestation during Lawrence's stay in Australia. In 1922, the Lawrences live in a Sydney suburb for three months, just enough to write a novel about the experience. *Kangaroo* features a protagonist much like Lawrence – a writer looking for places that make more sense than England. However, he never overcomes his initial shock of the emptiness of the Bush, and the only reason he remains for even three months is to make the trip worthwhile by producing a book. Tied up with his fear of the Bush is his terror of democracy; he uses similar language to describe both, a feeling of impending doom. The egalitarian spirit in Australia is beyond his understanding; it is contradictory to his "instinct for authority," which he believes is particularly an English trait (28). Lawrence frequently wrote about "natural aristocracy," an idea that some people are born better than others, not because of race or class, but because of their ability to be in touch with the rhythms of the cosmos. So the Australian insistence on equality feels barbarian. "There is no real authority, no superior classes, hardly even any boss!" he laments (26). In the course of making friends in Sydney, he begins to like the happy-go-lucky, democratically friendly

people, but can not shake his antipathy to such a stance: "It made him feel so sad underneath, or uneasy, like an impending disaster" (304). He missed "the aristocratic principle, the innate difference between people" (305). I have wondered how Lawrence's lifelong antipathy to democracy and socialism connect with his Oedipal complex, and I hope it is not simplistic to note that we can never be quite as special – that is, unique and superior – to anyone as much as to our mother. The statement does not, unfortunately, apply to all people, but only to those who received "good enough mothering".

Along with this possibly Oedipal-driven terror of democracy goes his horror of the Bush. Lawrence would not be oblivious to the sexual implications in the term. He is particularly aware, in Australia, of his pathetic fallacy, that his feelings about the landscape reflect his psychic problems: "Poor Richard wearied himself to death struggling with the problem of himself; and calling it Australia" (33). The problem is the same one encountered by Paul Morel at the above-quoted ending of *Sons and Lovers*, when he finds himself staring into the void. In Australia, "the absence of any inner meaning: and at the same time the great sense of vacant spaces" (33) recalls the giant, spinning universe without Mother that terrifies Paul after her death. Richard too has physical reactions to the Bush: "his hair began to stir with terror, on his head. There was a presence... the bush seemed to be hoarily waiting [I see another pun here]... It was biding its time with a terrible ageless watchfulness, waiting for a far-off end, watching the intruding white men" (19). These are shades of the Devouring Mother, along with a political awareness of imperialism, although the sense of a sinister presence behind apparent absence appears in too many places in Lawrence to be attributed solely to colonialism. There may be a component of White Man's guilt, combined with a fear of Woman in this compelling figuration of space. Simply, the fear of the repressed hostile urges against the Father may confront him particularly blatantly in spaces which are not "civilized" or inhabited.

CONCLUSION

The experience of his mother's death left Lawrence with both the void of a loveless world and an intense commitment to vanquishing that particular ghost. This drive to heal the wound pushed Lawrence over the globe in search of home and *Heimlich* feelings. This driving force manifested as an intense preoccupation with gender and power. He psychoanalyzed countries as though they were companions in his own psychic journey. In Italy, repeated confrontations with seemingly displaced persons reflected his own fear of never finding home again. In Australia, his resistance to democracy and his fear of the Bush reflect unresolved repressions and complexes.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 97-104

Post-traumatic doubling in H.D.'s bio-mythography: *Hermione* and *Paint it today*

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The traumatic experiences of H.D.'s adult life are profusely documented in autobiography, memoir, and fiction, beginning with her academic failure at Bryn Mawr College, ostensibly for poor performance in mathematics and English classes. Hilda's late adolescence was dominated by a short-lived engagement to Ezra Pound, as well as by a turbulent infatuation with Frances Josepha Gregg. A devastating series of personal and cultural traumas circulated around H.D.'s maturation during the Great War: her precipitous marriage to Richard Aldington, followed by an unexpected pregnancy in 1914 and a shattering stillbirth in 1915; the death of her brother Gilbert in combat at Thiacourt in 1918; her father's sudden death from a stroke soon afterward; a second unplanned (and "illegitimate") pregnancy; a life-threatening bout with influenza; and the dissolution of her troubled relationship with Aldington after the birth of Perdita, Cecil Gray's child, in 1919. H.D. fictionalized the tale of her ill-fated adolescent love for Frances Josepha Gregg at least three times in transparently autobiographical texts: *Paint It Today*, which she composed in 1921; *Asphodel*, probably drafted around 1921-22 and revised a few years later; and the novel *Hermione*, which she worked on in 1926-27. She needed to articulate this powerful obsession not so much to get it right, but simply to get it out and get clear of it psychologically. Haunted by traces of a lesbian passion that rarely spoke its name, H.D., alluding to Frances, declared in a 1935 letter to Silvia Dobson: "Love terrible with banners only emerges or materializes once or twice in a life-time" (Guest 228)[1].

According to Barbara Guest, H.D. "had intended to tell the story of her life in four books: *Paint It Today*, *Asphodel, Her*, and *Madrigal*" (34), all of which were generated by the traumatic resonances of World War I. This original plan, however, had to be abandoned: "'Madrigal' emerged as her autobiography, entitled *Bid Me to Live*. 'Asphodel' was written during a bitter and sometimes distraught period of her life, after the marriage to Aldington had broken up" (Guest 34). The composition of both autobiographical texts, thinly disguised renditions of H.D.'s experiences immediately prior to and during the Great War, seems characterized by traumatic obsession.

Only the impetus of severe trauma could fully explain H.D.'s continued efforts to revise, reiterate, and reinterpret her experiences prior to and during World War I. As late as the 1950s, she

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* USA.

1 Cassandra Laity, in her introduction to *Paint It Today*, also cites this quotation and notes that the "terrible" aspect of her love for Frances Gregg "continued to fuel H.D.'s imagination long after the relationship had ended", indeed, until the poet was "nearly fifty years of age" (xxxiii).

was still trying to work through with Erich Heydt at Kusnacht Klinik the "repressed emotion centered on the birth of her stillborn child in 1915" (Friedman *Psyche* 21). It seems clear that maternal loss, followed by spousal abandonment in the context of wartime deprivation and political upheaval, so disturbed H.D.'s psychological balance that it provoked symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder that would slowly be unraveled over the next several decades through the healing mechanism of "scriptotherapy" (or writing as healing). It was Freud who specifically prescribed autobiographical reformulation as a cure for the protracted writer's block that tormented H.D. in the 1930s. Overwhelmed by a "flood of war memories" evoked by reading the recently published letters of D.H. Lawrence, H.D. was ordered by Freud, her psychoanalyst, to combat symptoms of dysphoria and psychic fragmentation by articulating trauma in therapeutic life-writing. In a letter to Bryher, H.D. confesses: "Evidently I blocked the whole of the 'period' and if I can skeleton-in a vol. about it will break the clutch... the 'cure' will be, I fear me, writing that damn vol. straight, as history, no frills" (Friedman, *Analyzing Freud* 264). *Madrigal*, the *roman à clef* composed in response to Freud's directives, was eventually published as *Bid Me to Live*, the draft of which seemed to release H.D. from the stranglehold of post-traumatic stress disorder[2]. As Ann Douglas and Thomas Vogler remind us, the twentieth century has seen the "transformation of witness as victim to witness as survivor, and to witness as performer, telling the tale of survival as a form of self-therapy". Such "narrative testimony, in the form of an active remembering and telling can enable a move from the state of helpless victimage to a mode of action and even potential self renewal" (42).

In this essay, I would like to suggest a return to H.D.'s earlier biography, and especially to her unrequited love for Frances Gregg, in order to analyze how her late adolescence set the stage for extreme psychological fragility and vulnerability to traumatic triggers. In *Hermione*, a *roman à clef* depicting Hilda's troubled search for sexual knowledge, the protagonist apparently suffers from linguistic dementia precipitated by a loss of self-esteem:

> Her Gart went round in circles... "I am Her, Her, Her". Her Gart had no word for her dementia, it was predictable by star, by star-sign, by year (*H* 3).
>
> Her Gart... was no longer anything. Gart, Gart, Gart and the Gart theorem of mathematical biological intention dropped our Hermione. She was not Gart, she was not Hermione, she was not any more Her Gart, what was she?... Nothing held her, she was nothing holding to this thing: I am Hermione Gart, a failure (*H* 4).

One of the ways to re/member and recuperate the dysphoric self is through a deployment of psychological technologies of replication – a doubling, or *dédoublement*, of the injured, traumatized, and fragmented subject. Replication promises an infinitely deferred vision of theological coherence adumbrated by multiple, palimpsestic versions of an always dispersed and deferred (mythic) totalization of the self. Hence the numerous references to doubling and twinning in both the autobiographical texts and the biomythographies that emerge from H.D.'s confessional narratives[3]. Branding herself a failure for her inability to master a mathematical understanding of conic sections, Hermione Gart is initially lost in a whirl of disconnected verbiage, a traumatic discourse of repetition that must, she fears, "lead to

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2 Susan Stanford Friedman elaborates on H.D.'s Freudian strategy by comparing her autobiographical writing to the scene of psychoanalysis: "As analyst, the 'I now' who narrates eyes the 'I then'. As analysand, the narrated self is positioned in the part of resisting analysand whose unfolding story works through the tangle of repression into the clearing of recovered memories" (*Penelope's Web* 83). H.D. apparently emulated in her autobiographical prose the kind of autoanalysis practiced by Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams*. "H.D.'s self-analysis in the scene of writing boldly asserts that she can split the subject so as to reconstitute it – not as a unitary subject, but as a self with unconscious as well as conscious manifestations" (ibid.).

3 Friedman notes: "*HER*, written in 1926-27 after H.D. had read a good deal of psychoanalysis, demonstrates a self-conscious play with splitting, then doubling, the self into analyst and analysand... Invoking psychoanalysis, the narrator is analyst to her own troubled younger self whose fragmented story is recovered in the free-associational text" (*Penelope's Web* 83).

certifiable insanity" (*H* 6). Tormented and helpless, she cannot define the locus of insatiable desire; she can only reach, desperately, "toward something that had no name yet" (*H* 8) in a gesture that verbally echoes Oscar Wilde's homoerotic love that "dare not speak its name[4]".

"It was AUM. I am the word AUM. God was in a word" (*H* 38). Repeating, like an ineffectual mantra, the assertion of an ever-elusive identificatory phrase, "I am HER", Hermione first melds her sense of nonbeing with the transcendental AUM of visionary experience, then reaches outward to a doubling of the self in triumphant twinship with the mysterious Fayne Rabb: "for she is HER and I am HER. People are in names, names are in people" (*H* 131)[5]. These two young women, both "fey with... the same sort of wildness" (*H* 50), resemble "two convex mirrors" that, "placed back to back became one mirror" (*H* 138). The seductive Fayne Rabb serves as Lacanian mirror to Hermione's fragmented ego – the Janus image of a coherent (em)bodied personality. Playing the role of Pygmalion in an amateur dramatic performance, she emerges as an androgynous figure reminiscent of a Greek ephebe, the hermaphroditic embodiment of female perfection. In a genderbending replication of roles, Fayne plays the boy making a girl who will function as soul-mate and plaything; then she herself doubles as the soul-sister fashioned from sculptor's clay. It is she, Hermione believes, who will amalgamate the disparate selves of HER into a statuesque whole, a model of psychic coherence. Hermione places Fayne in the subject position of Lacanian object of desire, the *objet petit a* that doubles, in the world of the Imaginary, as Attic deity, mother-goddess, and sister/lover. Claiming prophetic powers, Fayne is cast in the mythic role of Pythoness and Apollonian consort, Delphic oracle and Pythian seer[6].

In contrast to Fayne/Josepha, George Lowndes, named after the dragon-slayer of Christian myth, seems little more than a Renaissance courtier, an inferior copy of Greek heroism artifically constructed by an Italian quattrocento artist. Josepha, in her remote, marble, classical stance, is a model of Attic purity:

> I am Her. She is Her. Knowing her, I know Her. She is some amplification of myself like amoeba giving birth, by breaking off, to amoeba. I am a sort of mother, a sort of sister to Her. "*O sister my sister O fleet sweet swallow*" (*H* 158).

"I" and "she" both meld into the single identificatory pro/noun "Her", as Hermione narcissistically envisages an amoebic process of reproduction, a simple cellular division of identity that multiplies one into two and transgresses osmotic boundaries of the self; twinning and doubling the univocal "I" into a polyvocal "we"; expanding protoplasmic (self-)definition to encompass the other and become the not-self – the antithesis of ego, the "not-I" absorbed by primitive, protoplasmic,

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4 Barbara Guest tells us that "Hilda decided that what she really needed was a girl her own age, a twin sister... Frances Gregg. H.D. wrote their story in 1922, entwining it with the drama of her wooing by Ezra Pound... H.D. was Her (short for "Hermione") Gart... Frances she named Fayne Rabb; and Pound, George Lowndes" (Guest 22-3). It is not surprising that Ezra Pound is named after Saint George the dragonslayer. Guest thus designates the keys to Hilda's "life description": "her bizarre beauty, her attraction to danger, and the need for a rescuer... Pound needed a disciple. Williams was one; he was joined by Hilda. 'Dryad' Ezra called her" (3).

5 Hilda's relationship with Ezra Pound must have been difficult, and the breakup of their engagement traumatic: "Williams had noted that Pound was shifty and scretive in his relations with women. Though Pound may have 'betrayed' Hilda, become interested in another lady of tapestries (the Irish Bride Scratton, whom he met in London), married Dorothy Shakespear, and invested his life in Olga Rudge, in spirit he never ceased to care for H.D." (Guest 6-7).

6 It is interesting that in *Paint It Today*, Josepha confesses in a letter to Hermione the gleeful dissimulation she practiced in her clairvoyant role: "Why did you always believe in all the lies I told you? ... Do you know why? Because you never grew up... I never saw any of the things I pretended to see... You are the only wise person I ever knew and I like you because I could tell you the most lies" (50-51). Her single authentic vision transpired when she "really did see a lot of blue sparrows or bluebirds fly and fly and fly around, above the bed" (50). In H.D.'s compulsive search for narcissistic self-completion through lesbian sister-love, Kloepher postulates a "deeply encoded" and "insistent, maternally connoted homoeroticism" (122). Fayne, observes Friedman, "draws out her unconventional, visionary, and creative potential" (*Penelope's Web* 144), in contrast to George, whose kisses "smudge" her out, and who insists that Hermione is herself a poem, though her "poem's naught" (*H* 212).

translucent being. The single-celled amoeba "bisects" in biological proliferation to become double-celled/selved. The parodic scientific metaphor surely calls attention to Her Gart's purported failure to master logocentric discourses and echoes the experimental concerns of both father and brother in the novel. One cannot but notice the playful homophone suggested by "bisectual" reproduction, a figurative process that adumbrates the bisexual desire gradually emerging from the textual unconscious of H.D.'s passionate *Kunstlerroman*.

In the same paragraph celebrating pseudo-scientific self-cloning, Her Gart quotes Swinburne's "Itylus", a poem that serves as a lyrical trope for the lesbian sisterhood of Hermione and Fayne. The nineteenth-century lyric recalls the tragic narrative of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. According to Ovidian legend, Tereus raped his sister-in-law Philomela, then cut out her tongue to prevent disclosure of the crime. Weaving the story of her victimization into a tapestry sent to her sister, the tongueless Philomela ingeniously sought revenge. Procne, outraged by the perfidiousness of her husband, killed their son Itylus and served his infantile corpse to Tereus in a lugubrious banquet meal. Cognizant of his cannibalism, the enraged father tried to murder both wife and sister-in-law, who were vindicated by the gods and transformed into swallow and nightingale, respectively. In this myth of metamorphic acquittal, both sisters occupy the subaltern subject position of wounded, oppressed and betrayed females – mutual victims of patriarchal violence, dissimulation, lust, and irascibility. Tongueless, Philomela nonetheless manages to weave the text of her tremulous tale on a tapestry that signals inarticulate despair but ironically enables the silenced subaltern to speak. Sororal (com)passion erupts in a sudden outburst of righteous indignation directed against male violence, sexual betrayal, and a brutal colonization of the female body[7].

Philomela has been raped and symbolically castrated. In this mythic paradigm of feminist solidarity, Procne manages to read the grotesque story of her sister's physical and psychic scars, which embellish a tapestry of sexual and textual transgression. Unspeakable crime elicits monstrous recompense. The story so powerfully affects Procne that she inscribes her narrative of sororal retribution onto the helpless body of Itylus, the holocaust sacrificed in expiation of a father's libidinous passion. In this tale of Attic violence, gender-bonding transcends even the notorious power of maternal love. Transformed into the unrecognizable icon of a monstrous mother, Procne divests herself of maternal responsibility in order to avenge sororal injury. The only text that the unscrupulous king can read is the integumental remnant of his son's sacrificial corpse, tasted with a transgressive tongue that once solicited the prohibited territory of Philomela's body. Multi-tongued and many-phallused, the authority of the father can only be dismantled by the painful tongue-work of paternal cannibalism.

Although the majority of H.D. criticism has focused on the mother/daughter relationship, it seems clear that the author bonds sister, mother, and lover in a relationship constructed in triangular opposition to the Oedipal father whose sexual identity breeds violence and disaster. The father is perpetually present in the mode of absence, as the failed hero whose (self)-removal from the field of heterosexual romance sutures the wound of mother/daughter separation and triangulates – in oppositional terms – the passionate bond of female affection. Sisters and mothers must ally themselves against husbands and fathers in order to punish the treachery of megalomanic lovers, power-mad patriarchs, and testosterone-driven bullies. True male affection, it seems, is homoerotic and cross-generational. Hence the cruel paradox of Tereus' unwitting ingestion of his beloved son, a replica of his potency and the corporeal agent of both genetic continuation and discursive immortality.

"Sleep, sleep my Itylus" (*H* 180), croons Hermione Gart before the dormant body of Fayne Rabb. But why this curious melding of her sister/twin with son/victim Itylus, rather than with the

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[7] Cassandra Laity, in her introduction to H.D.'s *Paint It Today*, writes: "H.D. and Gregg read Swinburne's 'Itylus', which emphasizes the sister-bond between the Procne and Philomel of Greek myth, almost obsessively to each other during their early intimacy, until the poem and particularly its refrain – 'sister, my sister, O fleet, sweet swallow' – became their ode to lesbian love" (xxvii). "The *Kunstler* narrative of *HER*", notes Friedman, "is fundamentally pre-Oedipal. The daughter, rejecting Oedipal love, returns to the fusion of the pre-Oedipal in her love for Fayne, to the merged identities of two women" (*Penelope's Web* 116).

sororal swallow Procne? Has Hermione inadvertently confused the sexual symbolism of Greek myth? Why are son and sister amalgamated in this murmuring love-chatter, in epithets evinced by a trance-like state of waking dream? Hermione, accosted by George the male dragon-(slayer), can only blurt out a proclamation of narcissistic self-love and lesbian sister-love in an outburst of ambiguous iteration: "I love Her, only Her, Her, Her" (*H* 170). George enigmatically responds: "Narcissus in the reeds. Narcissa. Are you a water lily?" (*H* 170)[8].

Hermione's erotic attraction to the Delphic Fayne saves her from capitulating to the power of an Olympian patriarch in the form of (Saint) George. But his amorous entreaties and physical passion, along with Fayne's own seductive interest in George, thrust Hermione into an inexplicable state of fever and delirium. Amy Dennon, the nurse standing in for the ideological state apparatuses of Edwardian society, "will say you were harassed, disintegrated and disassociated by preliminary erotic longings, wakened as it were in sleep, sleeping in a dream" (*H* 213). According to Shari Benstock, Hermione Gart "discovers through the mad dreams of her illness the power to make herself the subject of language" (*Left Bank* 341). Deborah Kelly Kloepher offers a similarly positive, matrifocal interpretation of Hermione's descent into madness when she asserts:

> Although her dementia is occasioned by loss – alienation from Eugenia, betrayal by both Fayne and George – it is also a space where the current of the subtext rises... Thus, although Fayne is in one sense a false prophet, she is also the force that redeems the mother textually, filling the text with body and sexual rhythm and delirium – all aspects associated with maternal, semiotic discourse (127).

In *Penelope's Web,* Susan Stanford Friedman ingeniously illustrates the way in which Hermione's metaphorical "psychic death" is metamorphosed into the "chrysalis of rebirth, the emergence of a healed Hermione" (115) by the end of the novel. "The birth of Her", Friedman tells us, "depends on an Eleusinian subtext that resides in lost and muted form within the dominant family romance" (122) – the repressed narrative of maternal desire. Hermione's "search for the Eleusinian Demeter... connects with the lost mother, the powerful mother... Re/membering Eugenia as Demeter helps usher Her into a symbolic world of language essential to her development as a poet" (124-25). In substituting the pre-Oedipal (female) developmental plot for the Oedipal family romance of male master narratives, H.D. has cunningly rescripted the *Kunstlerroman* as a revolutionary portrait of the artist as a young woman. The woman artist, through emotional identification with the sister/mother/lover of the infantile Imaginary, emerges as writing subject rather than as specular object. Even the shattering loss of sister/love to Oedipal entanglement would eventually be used as a dramatic (and mythic) subtext in the autobiographical story of H.D.'s emotional and artistic maturation.

Paint It Today, H.D.'s initial fictional attempt to come to terms with the loss of Frances Gregg's love, is far more lyrical and schematic than *Hermione*. The closer the narrator, Helga Dart, comes to a description of lesbian attachment to either Josepha or Althea in *Paint It Today*, the more she tries to remove herself from first-person narrative identification with her fictional alter-ego Midget:

> But I will not let *I* creep into this story. I will not let *I* go on banging the tinkling cymbal of its own emotion. You and I are out of this story, are observing and (if you will let *I* still intrude by way of speaking out opinions) I think, myself, that Midget really was a lucky girl. (*P* 26)

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[8] Friedman observes that George's taunting comment evokes Freud's theory of narcissism, "which regards homosexual love as a return to an infantile stage of object choice. But Hermione's narcissistic love is creative, not regressive. It accomplishes the birth of the subject 'She' and 'I' out of the object status of 'Her'" (*Penelope's Web* 119). Parodoxically, "instead of spelling sterility and death, sister-love as self-love leads to Her's birth as butterfly, as psyche, by the end of the novel" (124). Friedman also points out that the "Swinburne poems that Pound brought H.D. in their courtship become in the novel the code for the lesbian love through which Hermione creates both her self and her sense of artistic vocation... Hermione quotes Swinburne's lines about Itylus to vow that she will never forget Fayne" (120).

The novel is framed with a series of classical Greek analogies and alludes to Virgil's epic incantation in the *Aeneid*: "That runs in my head, *arma virumque*, that beats down the battered fortress of my brain, *cano*. I sing of arms and a god. Rome and the Tuscan foothills" (*P* 26). "I sing of arms and a god. Was there no god to save his ancient postulates?" (*P* 27). Why, one might ask, has H.D. deliberately mistranslated Virgil's famous invocation, a line known to every student familiar with the rudiments of Latin? The sole defect in Josepha's character, we are told, is her failure to learn Latin – a fault that Midget is hard-pressed to forgive. The narrator, deliberately abdicating the subject position of her protagonist, has nonetheless begun to merge, psychologically, with her beloved Josepha. If the seductive temptress cannot master Latin, then the author/narrator will deliberately forget Virgilian iterations. Or does H.D. self-consciously appropriate and alter Virgil's peroration? If one were to attempt a Lacanian symptomatic reading of *Paint It Today*, then this surprising translational "error" would provide a *ficelle* for unraveling the curious knot of genderbending affections embedded at the heart of this lyrical text. An early work, it functions as a *roman à clef* in which focalization constantly shifts between first and third person, and thinly drawn *dramatis personae* fill out the sketch of H.D.'s shifting romantic thralldom.

Not until *Asphodel* would Hilda/Hermione declare her love directly to Frances/Fayne and offer her the proposal of a lesbian *ménage*:

> "I, Hermione, tell you love you Fayne Rabb. Men and women will come and say I love you. I love you Hermione, you Fayne. Men will say I love Hermione but will anyone ever say I love you Fayne as I say it?... I don't want to be (as they say crudely) a boy. Nor do I want you to so be. I don't feel a girl... Do people say it's indecent? Maybe it is. I can't hear now, see any more, people". (*A* 52-53)

Ezra Pound, recast as Raymond in *Paint It Today*, seems little more than an erstwhile fiancé to be mentioned and disposed of. In *Asphodel*, Ezra/George is caricatured as "Sir Know-all" (*A* 55) and dismissed as "a monkey in its velvet jacket" (*A* 97). His most significant gesture occurs when he protests Midget's plan to accompany Josepha and Seaford on their honeymoon trip to Berlin (*P* 34): "As your nearest male relative, I tell you this won't do" (*A* 86).

Raymond's engagement to another woman thrusts Midget into the arms of the poet Basil (Richard Aldington) – a suitor whom Josepha dismisses as a whited sepulchre. Basil is ridiculed by the contemptuous nickname "Basil-pot. I mean the pot of Basil" (*P* 51) – an epithet that, by erasing the "e" in "poet", reduces the man to absurd caricature as an empty vessel. Fayne/Josepha attributes other pejorative names to Aldington/Darrington in *Asphodel*: "I suppose he's an earl's bastard and an accomplished black-mailer" (*A* 82). She malevolently writes to Midget in *Paint It Today*: "I do hope he gets killed in the war" (*P* 51). Although Basil does survive fighting on the French front, he returns to England contaminated by violence. Who, wonders Midget, "was this person that came back to her, with the smell of gas in his breath, with the stench of death in his clothes?" (*P* 46). The war clearly constitutes an ineffable trauma barely mentioned until it becomes a scene of post-traumatic stress disorder and tentative psychological recovery:

> So it was over, not only the peril, the suffering, the agonizing we called the war, but the years of (to some of us) even more painful period of convalescence. I mark, from my personal experience, this period of recovery as two years. (*P* 67)

The traumatic moment embedded at the heart of both *Paint It Today* and the first section of *Asphodel* is Fayne/Josepha's rejection of her sister/lover/twin in favor of a "trial marriage" to Louis Wilkinson, in an arrangement that proves to be an amorous ruse. The news of this wedding conjures up a flood of mythological associations in Hermione's imagination: "She had risen from Hell as Persephone from the underworld" (*A* 75). The language H.D. uses to describe Hermione's reaction depicts a seering psychological wound analogous to the rape of Persephone and the subsequent loss of her mother/lover Demeter: "The blue vitriol of Fayne's letter had left its scar... Scar that she hadn't turned from, wound that she had not repudiated" (*A* 77).

H.D.'s obsessional story of lesbian rejection is framed in *Paint It Today* by Josepha's mocking elusiveness and by the author's lyrical celebration of Frances Gregg's Janus-image, the idealized Althea – a sister-savior who offers the promise of physical love, mythic vision, and utopian bliss:

> Midget's lesbian redeemer, white Althea (based on Bryher), suddenly materializes in a Sapphic utopia at the end of *Paint It Today*. There Midget, exhausted by war and the loss of Josepha, rediscovers love, community, and freedom. In an uncharacteristically bold encoding of lesbian sexuality, H.D. depicts the two women as naked "daughters of Artemis", joyfully battling a storm-wracked landscape. (Laity xxiv)

In *Asphodel* and *Paint It Today*, Fayne/Josepha embarks on a duplicitous marriage that stuns Hermione/Midget and leaves her thoroughly disillusioned when she learns the truth from George: "I mean it's Llewyn that she's in with. The other person is only a sort of mari" (*A* 84). Feeling utterly betrayed, Hermione entertains a carnivalesque image of Fayne as a Degas figure "with a white face painted like a circus rider, ... doing her little 'stunt' balancing on toe on a white galloping stallion and holding two clowns (Llewyn and Morrison?) balanced on quivering buttocks" (*A* 97).

In both versions of the story, Frances/Josepha's triangular plot of amorous intrigue backfires when she finds herself unexpectedly pregnant in Italy. "I will bear the Christo", Josepha triumphantly announces, as if her progeny were the result of an immaculate conception or a virgin birth. "He will be a Christo or a bore" (*P* 51). She acerbically compares her parturition to "slimy seaweed that propagates itself by breaking off itself" (*P* 51). Impregnated by her husband Seaford, despite the charade of a marriage of convenience, Josepha will give birth to a symbolic exudation of seaweed that suggests, at the very least, maternal ambivalence and fear of evolutionary regression. "You will have a her", she prophesies to the pregnant Midget. "You will have a sort of witch thing that will know all that you don't know" (*P* 51).

At this point, one might reconsider H.D.'s deliberate appropriation and mistranslation of Virgil's master narrative. The Roman poet sings of "arms and the man". In *Paint It Today*, H.D. apotheosizes the Virgilian protagonist and elevates her to the status of a god. Only a deity, perhaps, could satisfy Hilda/Midget's monumental, deferred desire for a partner worthy of her refined, ethereal spirit. Only a goddess – or the Artemisian figure of woman – could satiate her indefinite and infinitely deferred locus of amorous longing. "Man" is erased from the classical text and literally dis-armed, his figure giving way to the Mother-goddess of H.D.'s mythic imagination. The historical trauma of World War I has virtually been erased from this version of the story. H.D.'s narrator self-consciously refuses to condone or celebrate masculine bellicosity, to sing either of arms or the man. Her song ends, instead, with a lyrical celebration of the childlike goddess/sister/lover who has illumined Midget's life and ostensibly erased the traumatic resonances of earlier romantic thralldom to figures like Raymond, Josepha, and Basil – fictive representations of Pound, Gregg, and Aldington. The union with this new sister/lover is sealed by a miracle:

> A small amber-colored being crept into Midget's life, a creature unbelievable, far less convincing than white Althea. A creature, white as a camellia, amber as a honeybee, black as a gypsy's baby. White and black, amber and camellia white, not to be believed yet easily proved as existent by cupping its firm black head in the hollow of a hand and watching it laugh, clutching with a hummingbird's claw (*P* 89).

H.D.'s daughter Perdita, the lost child so miraculously found, cannot be named or autobiographically represented. Historical chaos has itself been repressed in a schematic tale that consigns the Great War to the text's unconscious and allows H.D./Midget to give birth in the utopian spaces of the author's romantic and pastoral imagination. Perdita's fictional alter-ego must be evoked with mysterious, magical circumspection, as a fairy progeny or serendipitous gift of the gods, a "gypsy's baby" that resembles a mirage. This amazing creature erupts from subliminal spaces as a sign of future hope and delight – a sign confirmed by Althea, who will sanctify the kismet infant and initiate her into the mythic cult of the goddess Artemis.

The Frances Gregg figure who emerges in *Paint It Today* is a dark and witch-like seductress, a Faustine/Hecate caricature violently displaced by the idealized Artemisian savior, Althea/Bryher. *Paint It Today* ends on a note of utopian fantasy – a phantasmic identification with a female goddess-cult that will be replicated in *Asphodel*. H.D. is apparently working through the vicissitudes of adolescent and wartime trauma by fashioning a coded confession that offers the possibility of authorial mastery and mythic empowerment – as well as tools of aesthetic expression that allow her to reformulate trauma narrative in the genre of scriptotherapy.

In working through her lesbian identification with a lost beloved object in *Hermione*, H.D. incorporates the imago of deferred and insatiable desire into the shattered self as a eucharistic image of wholeness and plenitude. The atavistic desire to identify with the beloved harks back to primitive instinctual drives to devour and assimilate the "other" in cannibalistic gestures of physical incorporation. By designating Frances/Fayne, the elusive *femme fatale*, as an Itylus figure, H.D. fantasizes, through art, the eucharistic ingestion of a lover who has always evaded her. Strengthened by gestures of psychic incorporation, the newly empowered author will unite with the white Althea of her dreams to create a lesbian community that offers the bond of maternal protection and succor essential to the female artist.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 105-110

Animal rationale

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INTRODUCTION

Aristotle's famous definition of man as *animal rationale,* or in Greek *zoion logon echon* (i.e., a living thing endowed with reason, see *Metaphysics*, book Zeta) seems fair enough. As a biologist Aristotle has no problem classifying humans among the genus of the *animalia* (as the *genus proximum*). And as to the *differentia specifica* of the human species there can be no doubt that it is our reason that distinguishes us from the other animals. *We* possess reason and *they* don't. Reason is our human specialty. So far so good. Not much to object here, at least not at first sight.

But Aristotle doesn't leave it at that. He has other claims to make, such as that the more we train and develop our specific human faculty, namely our reason, the more human we will be. According to the great Stagirite intellectual self-realisation is our highest goal, and our best guarantee to happiness. Developing our intellect as much as we can will make us happy, or as happy as we can get: we become as specialised and as distinct from the other *animalia* as possible and in that way we fulfil our true human nature the best (see *Nicomachean Ethics*).

And Aristotle has yet another claim to make: being human is higher than being whatever other animal (not just for humans, but in an absolute sense). Aristotle's philosophical system presents a strict hierarchy: mind is better than body, organic is better than inorganic, theory is better than practice, male is better than female, adult is better than child, Greek is better than foreign, and, as I already mentioned, human beings are better than other life forms in this world (see e.g. *Historia Animalium* and *De Anima*).

Now I don't like this hierarchy so much, and certainly it is not an 'objective' one, in the sense that it would follow straightforwardly and incontestably from the objects it describes. Aristotle's hierarchy is part of a way of perceiving the world that could easily have been different. There always have been, and there still are, other perspectives.

To my mind, when it comes to understanding our own psyche, especially if we look at ourselves from a moral point of view, we still tend to start from Aristotle's definition, and in a very uncritical manner at that. Without realising it, we conceptualise ourselves according to the old system and thus we tend to make too harsh a distinction between 'animal' on the one hand and 'rational' on the other. Or in other words, I believe that we have – still have – too high an esteem of reason or rationality or of human beings as opposed to supposedly lower forms of being.

We inherited this peculiarity in the first place from the Greek tradition (mainly from Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, but of course *not* from Greek mythology and certainly not from Greek tragedy:

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tragedies like *Oedipus Tyrannos* or *Antigon*e warn us over and over again that we shouldn't try to be too clever, and that there are other sources of wisdom than just reason), and in a slightly different manner from the Judaeo-Christian tradition, starting with Genesis chapter 1, where man received "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth".

The Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato, and to a somewhat lesser extent Aristotle as well, had a tremendously rationalistic world view. In fact we might call them intellectual extremists. The Hebrew bible on the other hand is quite anthropocentric in character (much more so than other old religions such as Hinduism or the pre-Socratic Greek mythological civilisation). As everybody knows, these two cultural lines have come together and merged into the Judaeo-Christian tradition to which our modern, western society nowadays is still heir. As I see it, among other things this has led to a general western overestimation of what we regard as 'human'. For sure, we tend to despise those parts of our being that we regard as 'subhuman'. And as to the 'higher than human' goals that we might feel akin to or might want to strive for, we do not actually believe in them any more. Originally God was the centre of our universe, but we were created as His image and likeness to begin with, and besides, ever since Nietzsche, God is dead anyway! In short, in our modern, western, secularised society the centre of the universe is just us. *We* are the highest form of being, and that entitles us to do anything we like, especially to animals.

For your information I should perhaps add that I am not dealing with this subject on a social nor on a political level, considering e.g., the legitimacy of wearing fur coats or the question of animal rights in society (though it is of course more than awful how we treat our fellow creatures). No, for the remaining fifteen minutes or so my focus will be on our own psyche: how do we treat the less appreciated, 'animal' parts within our own psyche? Quite often, we tend to identify completely with our conscious being. We acknowledge only our conscious views and hopes, and we repress the rest. We needed Sigmund Freud to point out to us that there *is* such a rest to begin with, namely an unconscious part of the psyche that doesn't deserve our attention any less than consciousness. But Freud considered the unconscious – our repressed, animal-like drives as well as any religious or other taboos we might have – as something we should try to overcome. When all is said and done, Freud's ideals about humanity still imply that we eventually should aim at becoming as conscious and rational as we can. However, unlike Freud, his pupil Carl Gustav Jung is truly convinced that sometimes the unconscious part of our psyche is actually our best part, and this includes those parts of our psyche that we tend to project on animals.

ANIMALS IN THE ARTS, MYTHOLOGY, FAIRY TALES

As I just said, there are quite a few elements of our unconscious psychic life that we project on animals. That is not only clear from the arts, but also from mythology, fairy tales, dream symbols, and also from metaphors. To give an easy example: if we bear in our national coat of arms lions with lacerating claws, proudly prancing horses, frightening bears, haughty eagles, then the images of these animals are not meant to show the results of veterinary research. Instead, they are supposed to refer to the impressive power or the ferocity or the unfathomable courage of our respective nations. Or if St. George slays the Dragon, or the innocent Maiden tames the Unicorn, then again these animals are not to be looked for in biology; they are a symbol of something that apparently occupies our mind. These 'animals' are to be found inside us, not outside. Not even the highly realistic faithful little dog at the feet of the two lovers that we find so often in 18th C. painting refers primarily to dogs in the outside world: art historians and art lovers immediately grasp the little animal's iconographic meaning. The painted dog is there because it represents something of the human soul.

In the religion of Old-Egypt, in mythological systems all over the world (including the mythology in the older parts of the Hebrew Bible), in Hinduism, in European folktales, in literature,

animals can always be good or bad, smart or stupid, friendly or hostile, depending on the context, or whether the animal involved is perhaps a monster to begin with (like the Minotaur). They represent a rich arsenal of human drives. Quite often these drives are actually morally better or have a more accurate view of the situation than human consciousness and reason. For example in Numeri the prophet Balaam unknowingly gets himself into a precarious situation. Luckily his she-donkey recognises a dangerous angel that is invisible to Balaam himself. Somewhat later in the story the angel explains that he would have killed Balaam if it had not been for the natural alertness of the latter's animal. In T. H. White's *The Once and Future King* it is of vital importance that the protagonist, young Arthur, learns how to 'regress' properly into an animal-like state of being, because in order to be a great king Arthur simply needs his instincts. In the Harry Potter series, one of the characters, Sirius Black, survives years of torture because of his ability to change into a huge black dog (instead of reacting as a complicated human being he simply sticks to his enormous, doglike loyalty and endures his suffering).

Especially fairy tales provide us with an abundant amount of representations of animals of all kinds, nice or unpleasant, dangerous or meek. And of course not one of them is to be taken literally, that is to say in the biological sense.

Let us have a look at *Puss in Boots*. Most people will be familiar with this fairy tale. A miller dies and his firstborn inherits the mill, the second son gets the donkey, but the youngest gets nothing but a granary cat. From a social point of view the inheritance of the youngest is near to nothing, and of course he doesn't think much of the cat. He even plans to eat the poor thing for dinner. But the cat persuades him to give him a bag and a pair of boots. With the help of some cunning tricks the cat manages to help his master not only out of the gutter but even to the throne of the country. What is important to us here is what the fairy tale tells us about the often despised animal aspects of our being. Unlike what the young miller's son thought, he was actually the one who received the best part of his father's inheritance, namely self-confidence, trust, and a strong inclination for self-determination. Though Puss is animal-shaped, and thus supposed to be 'low', he represents a very positive complex. This complex enables us to make things come true by the power of imagination, perhaps even bluff. Puss is a perfect embodiment of the American Dream: anything is possible, as long as you believe in it. Start acting as if you are fantastic and the rest will come by itself. However, as a conscious strategy these things don't work so well, or perhaps not at all. The self-confidence depicted in *Puss in Boots* is of a natural, instinctive nature. That is why it shows up in the form of a cat. It has to be noted though that this particular 'cat' is keen on artificial things like boots and a bag, walks upright like a human being and is exceptionally well-mannered according to any standards of human social behaviour. Now that is what I call domestication! Apparently this complex is not a completely wild instinct. You can have a talk with it, so there is some middle ground between the spontaneous, animal-like impulses coming from the unconscious, and the ego. And this helpful complex does not appear as a dog, or a horse, or an eagle, but as a cat, that is to say an elegant small predator that usually has its own dark little ways, and is often a bit ruthless, with just enough lack of conscience to do well in life. By the way, at the end of the fairy tale, when Puss has achieved his goals, he voluntarily retreats to the background again. That makes this animal-like complex not only clever, but wise too.

In authentic, spontaneous fairy tales, that is to say the kind of fairy tale that has had a long oral tradition before it was written down, animals that offer help should not be rejected or things will go wrong. That much is clear. For the rest animals in fairy tales are like life itself: anything is possible. That viewpoint is very different from the more 'official' western view, the view that is primarily inspired by philosophy and the Jewish-Christian faith, where animals are narrowed down to something principally backward and inferior. But fairy tales, and comparable types of narrative, are rooted in life itself. They tend to counterbalance some of our more extremist cultural convictions and beliefs. *Little Red Riding Hood* for example, contains some really useful information if we consider the exclusively Christian background of the later Middle Ages. That naive little thing with her one-dimensional sentimental attitude symbolised by the red cap that she keeps wearing instead of brains, she too is an extremist! When asked, she gives away all vital information to the first wolf she meets.

That is very trusting and obedient, but not exactly an example we should follow. In the old French version of Perrault cute Little Red Riding Hood is simply eaten by the wolf/the Great Mother, and that's it. No need for unrealistic happy endings like the one the Grimm brothers invented. The animal was right! (I am exaggerating, I know, and there is much more to this fairy tale than we can go into right now, but nonetheless, naivety provokes evil, as Perrault saw quite well. In any case, the folktale shows us something quite different from what we are supposed to believe according to mainstream Christian and post-Christian tenets; even in the Grimm version, where in the end the little girl is rescued and restored to life, her behaviour is not presented as something we would like to copy, because it's quite obvious that she isn't any better off for having been in the belly of the wolf. Innocence simply doesn't pay, not even in the vanilla version of the story).

ANIMALS IN PLATONISM AND CHRISTIANITY

Our traditional western conceptualisation of 'animal' has been highly influenced by our conceptualisation of God. We still suffer from a huge moral polarisation within our psyche, and it doesn't help that we have done away with Christianity or with religion in general: the system is still the same, only the underlying structure has become less conscious nowadays. I will sketch very briefly what I think has happened, starting with Plato.

Plato himself hardly speaks about animals in a literal sense. No doubt this is because he regards them as too low and too uninteresting. To him they belong to the same category as slaves, small children and women. However he does mention animals now and then in a metaphorical sense. E.g., in Book IX of the *Republic*, in the context of his outline of the Ideal State, Plato warns us that we should never go to sleep without taking precautions. At night we should have the discipline to concentrate on reason and eternal beauty, because if we don't we are likely to become a victim of "dream visions that are unlawful". We may go to sleep, Plato says, but a hidden animal inside us will do the exact opposite: it awakens, shakes its filthy head and starts doing all those terrible things that contemporary stage plays nowadays like to show on stage, such as sleeping with our own mother. (Plato seems to refer to *Oedipus Tyrannos* here.) In other words, in the Platonic Ideal State people are supposed to control even their unconscious life, make sure they won't have illegal dreams! So much for totalitarianism.

Plato introduced into our western culture a strong, morally coloured polarisation between our (animal-like) drives and reason. Platonism induces us to strive idealistically for perfection instead of for balance and completeness. But perfection is unrealistic and sterile, you can't live in it. Also perfection excludes so many things that are worthwhile too, even if they do not fit into the pattern.

Plato's pupil Aristotle softened some of his master's most extreme ideas. It is clear that Aristotle presupposes less hostility between the 'higher' and the 'lower' parts of the human soul. Still, Aristotle did not fundamentally change the Platonic system, least of all did he correct Plato's overvaluation of reason. Not for nothing is the only divine figure in Aristotle's metaphysical system, the so-called First Unmoved Mover, equated by him with Pure Reason. And of course animals find themselves at the other side of the Aristotelian spectre.

Next, with special thanks to St. Paul, St. Augustine and much later St. Thomas Aquinas, Christianity forged the Greek rationalistic philosophical tradition together with the Jewish monotheistic religion into one, more or less consistent, system of beliefs. The result is that our conscious or unconscious metaphysical views tend to depart from a spiritual Father God very high above in the sky where all the light comes from. God represents the highest form of Being. He does have a son though, and together with the Holy Spirit the three of them rule the universe. Actually, the Holy Trinity is 'three' and 'one' at the same time, because the Son is the Father and the Father is the Son, and anyway the Holy Spirit unites them, so they are a unity. Apart from being a unity, the Holy Trinity – that is to say our highest divine principle – is human (because in the form of Christ God

became human), exclusively masculine, immaterial, unchanging, eternal, radiant with light, morally perfect, omniscient, omnipotent, probably virgin (no sex please), and also more or less adult (though Roman Catholicism also tends to worship the just born Christ, that is to say the Holy Child). For women, for earth or matter, for the body, for change and temporality, and especially for animals there are no clear labels in the Christian pantheon. Therefore they easily become an expression of what is *not* God, that is to say evil.

Of course for women the situation is much less dramatic than for animals: women have their mother goddess, the Holy Virgin-Mother Mary, and every 200 or 300 years or so she makes a career move within the Roman Catholic Church. The last one was in 1950, where it was officially proclaimed as a *dogma fidei* that she is accepted into heaven together with her (virgin) body and soul. As an image of femininity she is far from complete though, and besides, Protestantism is much less enthusiastic about her. However, it is a start. There is hope! Let us try and do the same for our fellow animal creatures too. I mean not only animals in the outside world but also and especially our own inner animal side: it is divine too.

MONOTHEISM

To my mind the real problem behind all this is monotheism. The good thing about monotheism is of course that it may provide a civilisation with a deeply felt sense of unity and focus, but what I do not like about it is the monoculture that it favours, a monoculture that doesn't leave room for important aspects of life. In our western cultural past animals, women, the earth, matter, and sexuality were held in very low esteem. Their place in the structure of the universe was low. That is why in popular belief the Devil lives in hell together with his granny. Granny is the Great Mother who is excluded from the pantheon. Hell is a place where everything is opposite to God, to the ultimate Ideal. Hell is not high above but deep down. In hell there is no light, but darkness, no eternal unchanging immaterial beauty but down-to-earth stench and decay. In hell we do not find cool rational celestial blue (as in the cap that the Holy Virgin is wearing in iconography), but the colour red of sexual heat, uncontrolled lust and emotion. And we definitely picture the Devil as having animal features. He is a red or perhaps black male figure (black meaning that he is our unconscious brother). He is highly sexual, in fact completely oversexed: that's what repression leads to. And he is hairy, he's a kind of beast with a goat's legs and a tail. In fact the western Devil looks a lot like the Satyrs in Antiquity, only the ancient Satyrs weren't that morally bad: they were the slightly lower, animal counterpart of the sensual divinity Dionysus. In ancient Greece all the different deities had their different metiers. Dionysus and his animal-like companions the Satyrs together saw to it that humans didn't lose their link with nature, including their own nature. (Of course Plato, and later Christianity, didn't like this type of deity at all, even less so because the Dionysus rituals were in part performed by so-called Maenads, dangerous and hysterical women: Satyrs and Maenads following a frivolous wine-drinking deity in a religious procession, this type of scene must have been like a nightmare to Plato).

To conclude: the extreme polarisation, sometimes even split-off, within our soul is much more of a problem than the elements in our nature that we have in common with our fellow creatures out there. There is a persistent western image of evil that we keep projecting on animals, because we cannot accept ourselves for what we are. When (the atheist) Goethe in one of the most famous German poems ever depicts the evil principle Erlkönig, then he suggests in so many words that this evil figure has a tail, like an animal. Also, the Erlkönig lives together with his daughters and his mother in a colourful other world that is threatening and tempting and real; yet this world is weird and invisible to the normal eye. As a picture of our unconscious Goethe's world of the Erlkönig should worry us: a powerful evil ruler that like the Christian Devil lives in a separate world together with repressed femininity. And from there he lures upon us: it is Erlkönig's ambition to snatch little children, not just the child within us but perhaps also future generations, and to incorporate them into

his world. The poem sketches a very dangerous situation, not far from dissociation. We suffer from an evil hostility, a kind of civil war within our souls. The more we try to be perfect and the more we identify with reason, truth, light, efficiency and goodness, the more the rest of our psyche tends to go its own dark ways behind our backs. As Jung says in the only film interview with him that we have, at the very end of his life (*Face to Face*, John Freeman 1959): "The only danger of man is man himself. We know nothing of man, or far too little".

Indeed, what we need is insight into the human soul, more especially we need depth psychology and the arts, and of course we need great psychology-and-the-arts conferences like the one we are attending right now!

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 111-117

Evil: A psychoanalytic meditation

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For David H. Emmert, MD

Some time ago, my friend Frederico Pereira suggested that I reflect on the problematic of evil and write about it. It was an extraordinary suggestion, for which I thank him. It indicated to me the depth of his wide-ranging concerns and experiences in matters psychoanalytic. My multiple attempts in trying to think through the problematic of evil have opened up a fertile space for thought and writing. Simultaneously, they have also offered me remarkable emotional experiences as forays into what I deem as the unknown. This is so because there is no escaping the problem of evil. In its multiplicity of manifestations, evil inevitably appears at the doorstep of our everyday life and crosses the threshold of our lived experience. As such, it also fully impinges on our intellectual and creative life in the humanities and sciences. Accordingly, the human condition finds itself inextricably bound up with occurrences and expressions of evil in various measures always and everywhere. By evil, I mean to specify acts that in any way harm or in any way destroy sentient life, gratuitously or purposely, randomly or predictably, even if such sentient life is one's own.

In my experience, the diverse modes of reflection on the problematic of evil approximate the uncanny. I say this because reflection and imagination disclose evil as a contradictory affective blend of total familiarity and strangeness, closeness and distance, comprehension and incomprehension. On the surface of it, a merciless light seems to shine that leaves no shadows. In its depths, reign chaos and night, which largely makes human existence an adventure in despair. Evil imparts the peculiar eeriness of something that is at once within and without our psyche, that is, simultaneously endopsychic and psychogenetic. It is at the same time our flesh and blood and incorporeal abstraction. Oddly, grave malignity as fate, "banality," and temporality permeate it in various measure. This paradoxical sense of evanescence and "banality" of evil is what so acutely struck the philosopher Hannah Arendt. In my view, all this adds up to what the adjective "weird" conveys in the American language, which still carries in it something of its etymological strong meaning in Old English. For these reasons, I experience thinking on evil as an *estranging* and at moments *disorienting* activity.

On first glance, subjecting unthinkable and unspeakable evil to thought and speech makes it clear that it lies beyond reflection as a twilit horizon of ineffability and menace. Evil reveals itself equally as a jumble of the known unknown, the unknown known, and hints of the unknowable. In any case, it intimates irrational malevolence, hidden behind a myriad of frequently benign appearances that can develop within and without us. In its complementary relationship with good, evil even more radically challenges our rationality. The complementarity of good and evil forces our mind into a

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veritable limit-situation. The upshot is the emergence of a malignant mystery that tends to lead us beyond good and evil, as we ordinarily perceive them. Yet, mystery – malign, benign, or otherwise – does not necessarily negate scrutiny, speculative thought, theological, theoretical, or scientific. Quite the contrary is always true. Mystery inevitably precedes knowledge, in sciences and the humanities, properly making up a never-ending dialectical chain.

In what follows, I will briefly meditate on the problematic of evil. I essentially conflate Freudian psychoanalytic theory of the dual life and death instincts and the potential descriptive phenomenology of their psychobiological effects. I borrow Freud's definitions of life and death instincts as two classes of antithetical drives. The first, the life instinct, energized by the libido or Eros, sustains life; the second, the "death instinct" or "death drive" (*Todestrieb*) or Thanatos, aims to reverse the course of life's development and growth. Freud based his conceptualization of both instincts on the biology of his time; therefore, for him, life and death instincts were primarily scientific as well as psychoanalytic formulations.

I shall restrict my use of the phenomenological description of evil to its multitude of lived experiences as "the work of the negative" (*le travail du négatif*"), as André Green has so cogently referred to it. The work of the negative directly draws its energy from the death instinct. As Green has emphasized, there are no doubt cases in which the work of the negative helps the ego in the Freudian structural model of the psyche by repressing unconscious urges of the id and the super-ego that would be damaging to it. Nevertheless, the work of the negative mostly oscillates between countless manifestation of masochism and sadism to various extents and purposes. Here, I use the terms masochism and sadism in their most inclusive meaning as destructive forces or "contributions," to use Freud's expression, to the libido. That is why a phenomenology of the work of the negative as generalized sado-masochism imposes itself upon us as heuristic and epistemological possibilities. By implication, such phenomenological descriptions of evil as the unrestricted work of the negative will make clear that the problematic of evil, in and of itself, ultimately lies mostly beyond our present analytical tools and for that reason beyond our comprehension.

I

> Considering the inorganic matter as the matrix from which all living substance originated, Freud put the final aim of all drives as a striving for the restoration of death, death being the condition that was earlier than life (1977, p. 25).
>
> Heinz Lichtenstein, *The Dilemma of Human Identity*

In 1920, as we know, Freud conceptualized the death instinct in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. With admirable lucidity, he wrote,

> *an instinct is an urge inherent in all organic life to restore an earlier state of things* which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of inertia inherent in organic life (1961, p. 30).

This primary, conservative and therefore retrogressive instinct has its foundation solidly in chemistry and biology. In its theoretical intent, it clearly distinguishes between two immense and intricately interconnected orders of existence: the organic and the inorganic. The inorganic precedes the organic and constitutes a material universe as basal elements of primary matter (*prima materia*). The world of primary matter and energy has its complex origin and history of development. It possesses intricate dynamics of atomic and subatomic structures. Contemporary theoretical and applied physics relegates the study of atomic and subatomic structures to quantum mechanics and nanophysics, which consider it as being anything but *inert*.

The second order of existence consists of the organic compounds as unicellular and multicellular tissues. Through evolutionary processes, cellular chemistry has endowed such organic compounds with the potential of life and thus sentience. This transformation takes place "under the pressure of external disturbing forces," whose origin, underlying principle, and goal remain mysteries. The upshot of this transformation is that multifaceted unicellular organic chemistry. The unicellular life evolves into its multicellular manifestations as vegetal, arboreal, animal, and human life, and thereby sentience and consciousness in various measures. In the case of human beings, cellular life achieves the status of consciousness that is also conscious of itself, a mode of double consciousness. The sciences of organic chemistry, biology, psychobiology, medicine, and psychology assign themselves to the study of such intricate organisms. At the heart of the dialectics of the inorganic versus organic, Freud locates the concept of the life and death instincts. He does so in full awareness that the inorganic is the essential building block of the universe, constituting unimaginable intergalactic spaces of interchangeable matter and energy, world without end.

As I have pointed out in passing, modern and contemporary physics has taught us that we can no longer consider the inorganic as *inert*. Each atom is the source of subatomic galaxies of its own, with vast subatomic powers. Hence, we need to understand the concept of death in the Freudian death instinct as return to the *prima materia* of the inorganic in a new way. The stasis and inertia ordinarily associated with the death and disappearance of conscious life is a surface phenomenon. The inorganic is the stuff of universal existence whose origin, dynamics, and eventual purpose yet remain inscrutable. In this sense, the death drive becomes manifest in its psychobiological mechanisms that seek to return the infinitely elaborate but unstable organic life to its less synthetic, much more stable originary and inscrutable state of inorganic elements.

In the unlimited cluster of dialectical oppositions that characterize good and evil, it would seem legitimate to state that the death instinct would stand as the psychobiological basis of evil. As such, it is primarily a human phenomenon. Such evil defines itself as destructive human intentions and acts as the most widespread sado-masochistic drives. Thus, I refer to evil exclusively as we human beings perceive it and experience it. Furthermore, to the extent that one considers evil as the work of the death instinct, its origin resides both inside and outside us, as perpetrators and victims, or both at the same time. Yet, I need to emphasize the recognition of evil, as the opposite of good, is totally a human phenomenon, even in its theological considerations. "I should not be surprised if evil has entered the world with man [human beings]," writes Paul Ricoeur, "for he [the human being] is the only reality that presents this unstable ontological constitution of being greater and lesser than himself" (1986, p. 1). One can only agree with and applaud Ricoeur's acuity on the phenomenology of evil.

II

> One part of the causes of evil is comprehensible and explainable. However, another part remains opaque and seems to go beyond all causality. It is within this opaque part where evil's most essential core resides [*Une part des causes* (*du mal*) *se comprend, s'explique. Mais une autre part reste opaque et semble échapper à toute causalité. C'est peut-être sa racine la plus essentielle*] (1986, 399; my translation).
>
> André Green, "*Pourquoi le mal?*"

The death instinct, as an active and enduring ensemble of negative psychobiological transformations that are coextensive with human life, makes the transition from the organic to the inorganic existence in death inexorable. These negative transformations result in pathologies, injuries, degradations, diminutions, and final annihilation of body and consciousness in death. On the one hand, the death of consciousness announces the negation of the existential meaning of an individual life. On the other hand, the necrosis of body tissues that ensues after death paves the way

for the final journey of the organic to the realm of the inorganic, from which there is no direct return. Thus, the death instinct, independent of judgments that belong to the field of ethics and govern the distinctions between right and wrong and good and evil in human life, defines itself in an avoidable process of disintegration of organic life.

Following Freud, Green calls this disintegrative process the "unbinding process" (*la déliaison*). As the dialectical opposite of the unbinding process, the binding process (*la liaison*) belongs to the life instinct and the libido. The principles of evolution, self-preservation, development, procreativity, creativity, and construction of meaning are effects of the life instinct and its life-affirming drives. Psychologically, the binding process is, then, a fundamentally integrative and synthesizing activity. The life instinct as binding processes brings together similar or distinct, comparable or disparate elements and sets them in motion in creative and constructive syntheses of organic chemistry. I correlate such binding processes, wherever and whenever they may occur, with good. On the plane of creativity, the binding processes appear to reenact the mystery of the primary transformation of syntheses of the inorganic into the organic compounds endowed with life. For this reason one may consider *all* creative activities as redemptive.

In contrast, the death drive aims at the psychobiological unbinding of all such creative transformations and syntheses, whether primary or secondary. In so doing, the death instinct delineates radically different kinds of destructive patterns energized by repetition compulsion, which according to Freud defines the concept of all instinctual drives, and which is operative in cyclical activities of nature. The death instinct calls for nothing less than a return to that unimaginable moment that inorganic elements "under the pressure of external disturbing forces" transform themselves into the organic and produce living organisms. The death drive therefore constitutes itself as an indomitable conservative call back to the self-sameness of the inorganic as the purest from of repetition as matter and energy. Or, on another plane of signification and in the well-known words of the English burial service: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return". For this reason, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," as Freud so accurately recognized it, is an ur-story foretold by the death drive.

III

> Lacking Freud's stoical courage, the Epigoni have come to drop the death instinct without putting any other hypothesis in its place (1959, p. 75).
>
> Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death*

The psychobiological truth of the death instinct, transforming itself as it does into the enormous work of the negative as an open-ended series of unbinding processes, compels me to think of it as generative of evil. There can be a descriptive phenomenology of evil then as we perceive it, experience it, and reflect on it, as both potential evildoers and victims. This would be true whether the work of the negative occurs on individual, group, national, or national level. The death instinct regarded as evil through operations of the work of the negative comprises an epiphenomenon that, from my perspective, is neither reductive nor a mere ethical judgment.

Amplifying somewhat on what I have already stated, I would say that, persuaded by Freud's straightforward conceptualization of the death instinct as I am, I deem authentic the causal link between the death instinct and the existential reality of the lived experience of evil. The death instinct provides the foundational matrix of the indissoluble mixture of biological and endopsychic factors that surface as our experience of evil. However, in no way do I intend this foundational linkage to be didactic or dogmatic. Freud reminds us that compared to the "life instincts," the "death instincts seem to do their work unobtrusively" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 57). In view of this comparison, the

death instinct as it surfaces in the work of the negative can be enormously subtle in its interminable, many-faceted operations. It also bears repeating, that I do not consider the secondary linkage between evil and the work of the negative an inviolable totalization. Since repression clearly falls into the domain of the work of the negative, it can often prevent destructive urges to overcome the ego, at least provisionally. Nevertheless, without psychoanalytic interventions such repressions may eventually return through the inconspicuous manipulations of the death instinct. One may say that this is precisely the reason why the return of the repressed so traumatizes the ego.

Having made such qualifications, one may still state that, for reasons yet unknown and possibly unknowable, the death instinct in its dual regressive-progressive dialectics with the life instinct manifests itself as an inexorable call for return of the organic to its inorganic origin. Which is why in its inevitable emergence, the death instinct shapes up as the inexorable dialectical antithesis rather than simple opposition to the life instinct. The force and inevitability of such an invincible dialectic is the reason for our difficulty to comprehend the profound mystery of the equation of the death instinct with evil. This incomprehension compels Green to paraphrase the words of Angelus Silelsius [German mystic, 1624-1677] "The rose is without why" to "Evil is without why". In other words, there is no discernible reason for the existence of evil. All we can say is: *Evil exists*. As such, evil situates itself on the other side of our powers of reasoning and understanding as human beings.

IV

Having defined evil as the work of the negative generated by the death instinct, I recognize that still one major question remains. Is the Freudian formulation of the death instinct a mere well-formulated psychoanalytic speculation? Or does it merely represent a highly daring and sophisticated conceptual construct, but is not either scientifically or clinically valid? Do psychoanalysts, biologists, psychiatrists, and our own lived-experiences confirm the authenticity of the death instinct? For my part, I must say I fully adhere to it and do so without any reservation. Freud's theoretically advanced concept of the death instinct offers a remarkably bold and exceptionally brilliant psychoanalytic insight. I believe so in spite of the criticism leveled at it by some psychoanalysts as having no biological or endopsychic basis, mostly in the last century. Today, this criticism is no longer even remotely convincing. The recent studies on programmed cellular and molecular death in cellular biology and medicine scientifically affirm the existence of the death instinct as apoptosis. Apoptotic processes change the morphology and biochemistry of cells. One biologist, Zahra Zakeri, writes of the "cell-killing signals that shapes the embryo" (*When Cells Die* 97). Such signals later result in the daily death of 50 to 70 billion cells in the average human body. Studies of entropy in physics also affirm the tendency of organized entities toward formal degradation, disorganization, and return to simpler states. Entropy of homological entities toward less intricate primary assemblages and arrangements propose something akin to the Freudian concept of the death instinct.

V

The pervasive intermingling of the death drive and the libido reveals the death drive's radically parasitic relation to the life instinct. Often the death instinct undermines the work of the life instinct to such a magnitude that it seriously weakens or kills off its host, as it were. It develops alongside the life instinct in a state of quiet symbiosis but gravely undermines it. For example, the death instinct profoundly subverts the structures and functions of the sex drive through sado-masochistic compulsions in a variety of forms and extents.

It is possible to imagine the temporal dimension of the life instinct and the death instinct as being set in motion at the cellular moment of human conception as a function of the sex drive. The temporal

dimension of human life and death coincide at this unthinkable moment that hovers between being, nothingness, and future creative and destructive potentials. The human embryo is already replete with the potential mysteries what lies ahead of it as life and death. No matter how counter-intuitive it might appear, the death instinct is an inextricable element of the life instinct from the moment of the inception of human life. As a result, the death drive is coextensive with the life instinct and eventually will be coterminous with it in the disappearance of conscious life and the necrotic process.

As it would be clear by now, from my viewpoint, this fusion of the life and death instincts as conception marks the place where good and evil will eventually make themselves manifest to us as possibilities of lived experience. I would suggest the site of this emergence as my response to the ancient question, *unde malum*? ("Whence evil"?). In this light, one may describe evil as a covert basal concurrence of the death instinct within the incalculable manifestations of the life instinct.

The impenetrable union of life and death at the instant of cellular conception and its latent endopsychic expressions render our daily life an unavoidable series of balancing acts between good and evil. In the structural model of the psyche, Freud considers the ego as the battlefield between the super-ego and the id as opposing forces. All modes of violence, aggression, cruelty, reconciliation, compromise, mercy surrender perpetually to one or the other and contest the integrity and the balance of the ego. Since Freud theorizes that the id and substantial parts of the super-ego itself are unconscious, these negotiations frequently turn up in consciousness as occult, fearsome, if not indeed paralyzing. The keen interest of these negotiations to psychoanalysis is due to this irreducible quotient of unconscious merger of good versus evil in their diverse extents in the ego as effects of the dual life and death instincts.

Now we must yet answer other significant questions: How does this seemingly impossible fusion of the mutually exclusive death drive as destructive impulses, desires, wishes and the life instinct with its unlimited life drives take place? How can one elucidate their functions alongside one another? Here, we need to remind ourselves of Freud's assertion that the "pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 57). I find in Green's twin notions of "n*arcissisme de vie, narcissisme de mort*" (narcissism of life, narcissism of death) an invaluable source of psychoanalytic illumination of Freud's far-reaching and seemingly contradictory assertion about the pleasure principle serving the death instinct. One may say that the Freudian notion of "primary narcissism" which is born in reciprocal relations between infant and mother as love of self is a feature of the life instinct as the "narcissism of life". However, the vicissitudes of "primary narcissism" are inherent in the extreme form of secondary narcissism, which Green aptly refers to as "narcissism of death". Narcissism of death masquerades as love of self as it destroys all the vestiges of libidinal binding relationships to other human beings and to the environing world as libidinal objects. For Green, narcissism of death erases perception in "negative hallucination" and the borderline psychotic state of "blank psychosis" (*la psychose blanche*). It compels the psyche into ostensibly an unstoppable glide into indifference to what is external to self-love. That is the reason narcissistic disorders are so resistant to successful psychoanalytic treatment. Narcissism of death may exteriorize itself in acts of unbelievable cruelty and barbarity, always in the name of self-love, self-protection, and paranoia. I find the destructive union of the death instinct with narcissism to be a paradigmatic example for the unrestricted number of other cases in which the death instinct coincides with the life instinct and radically subverts its function or thrusts it aside.

Defining evil as an ensemble of unbinding processes of the death instinct as the psychobiological work of the negative, as I have done, implies an ineradicable pessimism. This pessimism makes it impossible to foresee conditions of the possibility of a human world without evil. As Freud clearly discerned, the death is instinct is an endopsychic phenomenon with deep roots in inorganic and organic matter and their structures and functions. The death instinct is not under the control of our conscious will and its psychogenic components as such.

Yet, this pessimism does not totally exclude the hope of attenuating the work of the death instinct as evil in its incessant work to negate the life instinct. One can always confront what forced Hegel to declare in *Phenomenology of Spirit* that each consciousness *"seeks the death of the* other"

(1977, p. 113). The Hegelian formulation is a matter of desiring the death of the other by negation of their consciousness, a matter reifying this consciousness and returning it to its inorganic origin. For Hegel, it is clearly the death instinct at work in a dramatically manifest manner. It is a philosophical statement that maximally lays bare the ramifications of the Freudian concept of the death drive. Nonetheless, as Jean-Paul Sartre pronounced it so many decades ago, consciousness is nothingness, that is, mere awareness whose objects are external to itself. It confers on each individual a certain freedom of choice towards the predetermined elements of one's life and one's environment. On the plane of ontology, for instance, Martin Heidegger's concept of "being-toward-death" provides a positive awareness of the final and indisputable triumph of the death instinct over the life instinct.

From this standpoint, death becomes the inexorable horizon of life. However, "being-toward-death" as accepting that "I die" everyday is far from a mortifying experience. Paradoxically, it vivifies life by maximizing the sense of the life instinct's predicament in its mysterious pairing with the death instinct. Assuming awareness of the relentlessly psychobiological negative activities of the death instinct attenuates its unconscious force as a drive. In this sense, psychoanalysis plays a crucial role in lessening the effect of the unbinding operations of the death instinct that we attribute to evil. Bringing the whole process to the forefront of consciousness and placing it in the light of a "receptive unconscious," using Christopher Bollas's terminology places it within the realm of consciousness freedom and offers us choice and thus a measure of responsibility. Hence, there is a possibility of choosing the struggle of a *creative* life over against the destructive death instinct, or at least a tolerable amalgam of both.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 119-126

Celestina, heteroglossia, and theory of mind: The rise of the early-modern discourse

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An increasing interest for the human being, for the individual, is at the core of the birth of the Renaissance era and infiltrates the mentality of the Renaissance people. The human organism becomes the center of attention for scholars and scientists in search of medical and philosophical explanations. This interest is apparent in the development of the artistic and scientific endeavors of the epoch and surfaces as well in literature, gradually making its way into Renaissance literary manifestations. Characters begin to cut the strings that attach them to the narrator; they start walking on their own and their voice, not yet fully developed, becomes more independent and authentic. They are no longer worthless *pions* pushed around and at the mercy of the omniscient author. Their vicissitudes at times constitute the fabric of the narrative, thereby shifting away from the idealism that formerly prevailed. The realistic discourse of witches, thugs, even pages entrenches the dialogues and serves as a counterpoint to the highly stylized language of courtly lovers, pastoral poets, or chivalric heroes. Where the two languages collide arises the contrast which will permit the parody to blossom.

If the title "Early Modern Literature" is lately getting more traction in the academic fora, it is partly due to the fact that it more clearly encapsulates an era *à cheval* between the medieval and the Renaissance periods; an era that sees its literature mutate into a (proto)-modern literature, which Russian scholar Mikhail Bakhtin analyzed in *The Dialogic Imagination* and particularly in the essay, part of this volume, entitled "The Discourse in the Novel." In said essay, Bakhtin argues for the distinction, though not clear-cut[1], of two lines in the development of the novel:

> In the further history of the European novel we will continue to notice the same two fundamental lines of development. The Second Line, to which belong the greatest representatives of the novel as a genre (its greatest subgenres as well as the greatest individual examples), incorporates heteroglossia[2] *into* a novel's composition, exploiting it to orchestrate its own

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[1] "It is very difficult to speak of a clear-cut genetic distinction between the two lines, especially in the early stages of their development" (Bakhtin 400).

[2] Heteroglossia is a key concept in Bakhtin's theory of the novel. According to the editor of *The Dialogic Imagination*, it is defined as follows: "The base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions – social, historical, meteorological, physiological – that will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and

meaning and frequently resisting altogether any unmediated and pure authorial discourse. The First Line, which most strongly exhibits the influence of the Sophistic novel, leaves heteroglossia outside itself, that is, outside the language of novel; such language is stylized in a special way, a novelized way (375).

Bakhtin later further differentiates these two lines by adding that:

Novels of the First Stylistic Line approach heteroglossia from above, it is as if they *descend onto* it (the Sentimental novel occupies a special position here, somewhere between heteroglossia and the high genres). Novels of the Second Line, on the contrary, approach heteroglossia from below: out of heteroglot depths they rise to the highest spheres of literary language and overwhelm them (400).

For Bakhtin the greatest exemplar of this Second Line is *Don Quixote*. In this novel, as well as those that paved the way for Cervantes' masterpiece to come about, the language is authentic, free from the heavy pathos and all moribund and false accents. Down the genealogical tree of the Second Line could be found the picaresque novel, which for Bakhtin prepares the ground for the "orchestration," the culmination of the discursive innovations comprising the novel (Bakhtin, 408-409).

Nevertheless absent from Bakhtin's genealogy is the presence of a crucial text which, if not in the European, at least in the Spanish strand left an indelible trace, namely *Celestina*. This work by Fernando de Rojas first published in a 16-act version in 1499 could be considered the second most influential text of Spanish literature after *Don Quixote*[3]. It tells the story of a low nobleman, Calisto, who falls madly in love with a beautiful lady named Melibea, only daughter of Alisa and Pleberio, a noble and particularly affluent family of Salamanca, Spain. In order to see Melibea and eventually to consummate his love, Calisto will, with the help of his servants, contract the services of a go-between/bawd named Celestina[4]. The success of the adventures of the two lovers and Celestina will spark the publication of many continuations, imitations, and adaptations[5] as well as numerous translations into English, French, Italian, German, Hebrew, and Latin (Britannica)[6]. By mid-seventeenth century, the book had been reprinted in Spanish more than a 100 times (Britannica). It was in Joseph Snow's words: "the sixteenth-century's premier 'best-seller' in Spain" (3).

Indeed, what has fascinated the Hispanic criticism, and generated an enormous volume of scholarly works, has been, among other things, *Celestina*'s realism, its lack of a clear interpretation, and its portrayal of the characters and voices, especially when situated in the historic-social context in which it was written.

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therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide; as such, it is that which a systematic linguistics must always suppress" (Holquist, 428).

3 "In poll after literary poll taken in Spain about its outstanding literary achievements, *Celestina* consistently runs a close second to that country's abiding and internationally better-known Baroque-era masterpiece, *Don Quijote*" (Snow 2).

4 So as to not spoil the enjoyment of the story, I will not provide any more details about the tragic unfolding of the plot; indeed, one of my aims being to make known *Celestina* to the non-Hispanic scholarship.

5 Joseph Snow and Ivy Corfis define these terms as follows: 'Continuations,' works that directly use Rojas' characters; 'Imitations,' works which borrow [*Celestina*'s] structure; and 'Adaptations,' works whose connections to [*Celestina*], while clear, are looser and more free-form (xiv).
For a complete list of the continuations, imitations and adaptations of *Celestina*, please see Julien Simon's dissertation called: "A Neurocognitive Study of Literary Genres: The Case of the *Novela Dialogada*".

6 In Joseph Snow's opinion, perhaps more than the numerous (re)-printings, it is the flourishing of adaptations of *Celestina* in the XVI and XVII centuries in Spanish as well as in other languages, which guaranteed its initial success, or "first life" as he calls it in his essay, "*Celestina* (1499-1999) Medieval and Modern: Survival & Renewal of a Spanish Classic:"
"I feel certain that these works [*Celestina*'s adaptations], most of whose literary attainments rank far below those which scholarship accords to *Celestina*, were nonetheless enthusiastically read and appreciated in their day and, doubtless, played an important role in keeping the original in print (6)".

INTERPRETATIVE AFFORDANCES OF CELESTINA

Celestina has alternatively been interpreted as a moralizing and didactic fiction, showing in a rather crude way the tragic consequences of a love affair carried out in an un-Christian manner (see Bataillon's La Célestine *selon Fernando de Rojas*), or on the contrary as a self-indulgent piece of fiction, risqué at times, in which lovers disregard proprieties in matters of courtship and flimsily restraint their heart. Furthermore, it has been interpreted as a work of a Jewish *converso* [convert] expressing his deep criticism of a society prone to hypocrisy and corruption, or as a parody of courtly love, *el amor cortés*, and its novelistic expression, the sentimental novel in fashion in Spain at the end of XV century (see Severin).

REALISM

Celestina's success in the literary panorama of the time is also due to its realism, akin to the picaresque world of the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Several scholars (see Fothergill-Payne and especially Castells), using Bakhtin's concept of Grotesque Realism, underscored this trait. Indeed, the world described by Fernando de Rojas is that of lecherous wenches, Areúsa and Elicia, treacherous and greedy servants, Sempronio and Pármeno, and of an impecunious and covetous bawd who also engages in witchcraft, Celestina. In sum, the world of the lowly characters occupies a prominent place in Rojas' work. About *Celestina*'s world and characters Joseph Snow claims that:

> In its surrendering pride of protagonism to Celestina and her rag-tag confederation of avaricious servants and lusty wenches, in its revealing of the decay of urbanized moral order by penetrating its poorly-veiled hypocrisy and corrupt value system, and in investing all of its characters, regardless of social-level, with fully-rounded personalities that must be judged without the intervention of any controlling narrative voice, [*Celestina*] clearly was striking out on its own path, illuminating a darker side of the Renaissance (2-3).

PORTRAYAL OF CHARACTERS

This last quote highlights another aspect of *Celestina*'s longevity, namely the portrayal of characters, which, as noted earlier, are cutting the strings that attached them to the author. Their voices are recognizably human and are the vehicle of evolving fictional minds as Dorothy Severin notes in the introduction to her book, *Tragicomedy and Novelistic Discourse in* Celestina: "The voices of *Celestina* are human beings in metamorphosis, as Lazarillo will be nearly half a century later. Even the cardboard Calisto emerges as the hero of imagination" (4). This characteristic led Stephen Gilman to ask, in a chapter entitled "The Art of Character" (in his book *The Art of* La Celestina): "How does Rojas make [the characters] humanly believable and knowable?" (57).

Bakhtin's heteroglossia, or the notion – paramount to the development of the novelistic discourse – that fictional voices are entrenched in the historic-social context in which they uttered and resist "the pure authorial discourse" (400), is a key element of Rojas' discourse. Consider the following passage from Act IV[7]:

Melibea (...) Dime, madre, ¿eres tú Celestina, la que solía morar a las tenerías, cabe el río?

Celestina Señora, hasta que Dios quiera.

Melibea Vieja te has parado. Bien dizen los días no se van en balde. Assí goze de mí, no te conosciera sino por essa señaleja de la cara. Figúraseme que eras hermosa; otra pareces: muy mudada estás.

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7 For this passage as well as in the remainder of the article I am quoting from Piñero's edition of *Celestina*.

Lucrecia (¡Hi, hi, hi! ¡Mudada está el diablo! ¡Hermosa era con aquel su Dios os salve que traviessa la media cara!)

Celestina ¿Qué hablas, loca? ¿Qué es lo que dizes? ¿De qué te ríes?

Lucrecia De cómo no conoscías a la madre en tan poco tiempo en la *filosomía* de la cara.

Melibea No es tan poco tiempo dos años, y más que la tiene arrugada.

Celestina Señora, ten tú el tiempo que no ande, terné yo mi forma que no se mude. ¿No has leýdo que dizen: verná el día que el espejo no te conozcas? Pero también yo encanecí temprano y parezco de doblada edad. Que assí goze desta alma pecadora, y tú desse cuerpo gracioso, que de quatro hijas que parió mi madre yo fuy la menor. Mira cómo no so vieja como me juzgan.

Melibea Celestina, amiga, yo he holgado mucho en verte y conoscerte; también hasme dado plazer con tus razones. Toma tu dinero y vete con Dios, que me parece que no deves haver comido. (159-60).

Melibea (...) Tell me, Mother, are you Celestina that used to live near the tanneries, down by the river?

Celestina I am, please God, for so long as he spares me.

Melibea You've aged very much. They're right when they say time takes its toll. I swear I wouldn't have known you for the scar on your face. I seem to remember that you were a handsome woman. You don't look the same, you've changed very much.

Lucrecia [aside] Ha, ha, ha! *The old devil has indeed changed.* Beautiful, you say, with that scar – excuse my mentioning – across half her face!

Melibea *What are you saying, you mad thing? Why are you laughing?*

Lucrecia *I was laughing because you did not recognize the* phylosomy[8] *of Mother's face after such a short time*.

Melibea *Two years is a long time; and besides she has grown wrinkled*.

Celestina If you can make time stand still, madam, I'll keep my face just as it was. Haven't you read the saying, The day will come when you won't recognize yourself in the glass? All the same, I went grey early and look twice my age. But as sure as you're a young beauty and I'm an old sinner, I was the youngest of my mother's four daughters. So I'm not so old as I'm taken for.

Melibea Celestina, my friend, I've been delighted to have seen you speak and made your acquaintance. And I've enjoyed your conversation too. Take your money now God be with you, for you can't have eaten yet[9].

Besides the rather crude, or I shall say bakhtinianly grotesque, description of Celestina, the first thing that interests us in this exchange is the fact that Lucrecia, Melibea's maid, misspoke the word 'fisonomía' (physiognomy) and uttered 'filosomía,' a corruption of the language typical of farmers and common people (Piñero, 159n22). In doing so, Rojas differentiated the language of the characters on the basis of their social status and thus captured their heteroglot nature.

Nonetheless, beyond the purely linguistic level of the exchange what emerges here is the mind of Celestina, a human-being hurt in her feelings. She gets angry at Lucrecia's giggling – she knows her quite well –, and wounded in her vanity[10] by Melibea's words but still maintaining her composure, she respectfully responds to her in an attempt to restore her honor and blames her grey hair for her changed appearance. This deep psychologization of the characters, this delving into their

8 Neologism I created to show how Lucrecia misspoke herself.

9 In italics, it is Mack Singleton's translation. Otherwise, it is J. M. Cohen's translation.

10 Dorothy Severin, in her edition of *Celestina*, noted this "unexpected" vanity, which Celestina exhibits here.

psychology, represents a different plane in their portrayal. They are becoming human-like entities with conscious intentions.

THEORY OF MIND

The ability to read, understand, and manipulate other minds has been, for the past three decades, a crucial and ever-growing field of inquiry in the cognitive sciences. Theory of Mind (or ToM), as this field is known, can indeed help us examine the mechanics of the literary minds at play. The concept of Theory of Mind (also referred as mindreading) started, in the field of primatology, with the publication of a paper in 1978, by Premack and Woodruff, entitled "Does a chimpanzee have a theory of mind?" in which the authors were wondering if chimpanzees could recognize the intentions of a human being. Two theories grew out of this research: 'Theory-Theory' and the 'Simulation-Theory.' Theory-Theory postulates that we possess and employ a conceptual knowledge about other people's mental states. We theorize about other minds. Simulation-Theory suggests that when interacting with other people (i.e., other minds), we behave as if we were them. In other words, we mentally put ourselves in the shoes of the other person. We pretend to be them to know how they feel or what they think. This latter theory is logically tied to the notion of empathy. Both theories will be crucial in the episode of *Celestina* that I will analyze here.

After Melibea's last line in the passage above, the conversation takes a different turn. Celestina's real *empresa* [undertaking] will finally begin, thus demonstrating the full breadth of her agency or ability to understand Melibea's state of mind and respond accordingly.

CELESTINA'S THEORY OF MIND

Her *empresa* is definitely not complete. Therefore, upon Melibea's polite dismissal, not without affirming first her benevolence[11] followed by her disinterest for monetary reward, since she has always had something to eat[12], she admits that she had come to speak to her on behalf of a 'Christian in pain.' The thought of a person in pain, furthermore a Christian, could have only been meant to provoke in Melibea some sort of empathetic response. Celestina's careful and apologetic discourse is now longer and is punctuated with emphatic expressions such as: "¡O angélica imagen!" ["*Oh my angelic vision!*"], "¡O perla preciosa!" ["*Oh precious pearl!*"], or "¡Donzella graciosa y de alto linaje!" ["*Oh gracious maiden of noble linage!*"]. She seems to be mentally preparing Melibea so that she does not get too upset upon revealing the true purpose of her visit. Indeed, she drops in the middle of one these long speeches that: "Assí, que donde no ay varón todo bien fallesce; con mal está el huso, quando la barba no anda de suso." (161) ["*Where there is no man, all good things are lacking. 'With no beard around, the spindle slows down,' as the old fellow says.*"]; insisting again that it is about "agenas necessidades" [somebody else's needs].

Her strategy appears to be successful when after indicating that she only needs a word from her to cure him (the 'Christian in pain')[13], Melibea says that "[p]or una parte, me alteras y provocas a

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11 "Esto tuve siempre, querer más trabajar sirviendo a otros, que holgar contentando a mí" (160) ["I've always put service to others before my own pleasures."].

12 "Que con mi pobreza jamás me faltó, a Dios gracias, una blanca para pan y un quarto para vino (...). Jamás me acosté sin comer una tostada en vino y dos docenas de sorvos, por amor de la madre, tras cada copa" (160) ["For though I'm poor, never (...) have I been short of a penny for bread and four-pence for wine I never went to bed without a sop, and a couple of dozen sips after each bite for the good of my stomach."].

13 "(...) con sola una palabra de tu noble boca salida que le lleve metida en mi seno, tiene por fe que sanará, según la mucha devoción tiene en tu gentileza" (161) ["That a single word from your noble lips – wich I shall bring him concealed in my brast – will cure him. Such is his regard for your courtesy."].

enojo; por otra, me mueves a compassión" (161) ["*On the one hand you trouble me and vex me; on the other you move me to tears*"], and later adds: "Que yo soy dichosa si de mi palabra ay necessidad para salud de algún christiano. Porque hazer beneficio es semejar a Dios (...)" (161) ["If one word from me is enough to save a Christian's soul, I'm a fortunate woman, for to do kindnesses is to resemble God (...)"]. However, after another speech complementing Melibea's beauty and good-nature, Celestina mentions Calisto's name[14]. Melibea is deeply offended:

> ¡Ya, ya, ya! Buena vieja, no me digas más, no pases adelante. ¿Ésse es el doliente por quien as fecho tantas premissas en tu demanda, por quien has venido a buscar la muerte para ti, por quien has dado tan dañosos passos, desvergonçada barvuda? (...) ¡Quemada seas, alcahueta falsa, hechizera, enemiga de onestidad, causadora de secretos yerros! ¡Jesú, Jesú! (161)
>
> Stop, stop! That's enough, my good woman. Don't go on. So this is the sufferer for whom you've been making this long-winded request, for whom you've undertaken this perilous errand, for whom you've come to court your death? You shameless old hag! (...) You evil bawd! You witch! You enemy of all virtue and plotter of secret sins, you shall burn for this! Sweet Jesus!

And indeed, right after Melibea's extended and unequivocal response Celestina acknowledges in an aside that she is probably heading in the wrong direction: "¡En hora mala acá vine si me falta mi conjuro! (...) ¡Ce, hermano que se va a todo perder!" (163) ["If my spell fails, this will have been an unlucky visit indeed. Come here, brother devil, or all is lost."]. Now Melibea's discourse, because of her anger, is longer. Repeating that she cannot believe Celestina dared suggest such a petition and provides some background regarding the circumstances of her encounter with Calisto. Perhaps it is this fact that makes Celestina regain confidence. In another aside, she says: "¡Más fuerte estava Troya, y aun otra más bravas he yo amansado! Ninguna tempestad mucho dura" (164) ["Troy was stronger, and I've tamed fiercer ones than this. No storm lasts for ever."]. In spite of Melibea's anger, Celestina appears to be in control of the conversation, now she even asks Melibea for another favor (besides the few words she requested earlier). She's asking for a prayer and a *cordón* [girdle/cord]:

> Una oración, señora, que le dixeron que sabías de sancta Polonia para el dolor de las muelas; assí mismo tu cordón, que es fama que ha tocado todas las reliquias que ay en Roma y Jerusalem. Aquel cavallero que dixe pena y muere dellas. (165)
>
> A prayer to St Apollonia against the toothache, which he has been told you know, madam, and your girdle that they say has touched all the relics in Rome and Jerusalem.

Melibea is trapped, all along she assumed that the pain the Christian was feeling was of a sentimental pain. Indeed, she responds: "Si esso querías, ¿por qué luego no me lo espresaste? ¿Por qué me lo dixiste por tales palabras?" (165) ["If that was all you wanted, why didn't you say so at once? *Why did you not make your request more explicit?*"]. What ensues then is a long 'false' apology by Celestina in which she explains why she omitted to mention Calisto's name sooner.

> Señora, porque mi limpio motivo me hizo creer que, aunque en otras cualesquier lo propusiera, no se havía de sospechar mal. Que si faltó el devido preámbulo, fue porque la verdad no es necessario abundar en colores. Compassión de su dolor, confiança de tu magnificencia ahogaron en mi boca al principio la expressión de la causa (...). (165)
>
> Because the purity of my motives, madam, made me believe that whatever language I used no one would suspect me of evil. If I didn't make the right introduction, it's because the truth doesn't need much embellishment. *Pity for his pain and the confidence your magnanimity inspired in me, stifled in my mouth the proper exposition of my plea* (...).

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[14] "(...) Si pensara, señora, que tan de ligero havías de conjecturar de lo passado hablar en cosa que a Calisto ni a otro hombre tocasse" (164) ["If I had though, madam, that you would so easily suspect me of wicked intentions, your permission would not have been enough to embolden me to speak in a matter concerning Calisto or any other man."].

The dialogue continues on for some time. Melibea will first justify her *alteración* [agitation] and inquiry about Calisto's toothache, then Celestina will astutely praise Calisto, and finally Melibea will say:

> ¡O, quánto me pesa con la falta de mi paciencia! Porque siendo él ignorante y tú ynocente, havés padecido las alteraciones de mi ayrada lengua. Pero la mucha razón me relieva de culpa, la qual tu habla sospecha causó. En pago de tu buen sofrimiento, quiero cumplir tu demanda y darte luego mi cordón. E porque para escrivir la oración no havrá tiempo sin que venga mi madre, si esto no bastare, ven mañana por ella muy secretamente. (169)
>
> *Oh, how I regret having lost my temper! I see now that he had no evil intention and that you were innocent too. And yet I made you suffer the outbursts of my evil tongue. But you will acknowledge that I was justified in assuming what I did and that such an assumption would excuse my error – of which your suspect words were the cause. However, as payment for your forbearance with me, I will indeed accede to your request and immediately give you the girdle. But, alas! – there is not sufficient time to write the prayer down before my mother's return. Well, if the girdle does not heal him, then return tomorrow for the prayer – and very secretly.*

To which Lucrecia, who has been listening to the entire exchange, responds in an aside: "¡Ya, ya, perdida es mi ama! ¿Secretamente quiere que venga Celestina? ¡Fraude ay! ¡Más le querrá dar que lo dicho!" (169) ["*Ah ha! My mistress is lost! Is she proposing to Celestina to come secretly? There's some trick in all this. She may want to give her something more than she has said.*"]. And she adds later on in another aside: "No miento yo, que mal va este fecho" (169) ["I wasn't mistaken. This business will lead to trouble."]. The success of Celestina's *empresa* is complete. Melibea asks her to come back the following day to pick up the *oración* [prayer] and surrenders her *cordón*. Celestina's ability to read and manipulate Melibea's mind has been flawless.

What we recognize in Celestina is the capacity to read the intentions of her counterparts and to respond to them in a 'human-like' fashion. In this scene, which serves as a case study of her mindreading abilities, Rojas' mastery is patent. He not only creates a character but also, an individualized mind. Scholars have long noticed and praised his talent in creating well-defined personalities and Celestina is perhaps the author's most successful creation. The title of the first edition, *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* [Comedy of Calisto and Melibea], suggested at first that the two lovers constituted the central plot of the story. However, its literary offspring – that is, the many continuations that surfaced during the first half of the sixteenth century[15] – converted Celestina into the nexus of the fictional fabric the emulators were sewing. She eventually imposed herself and modern publications now bear her name[16].

The emergence of the 'literary Theory of Mind' that the characters exhibit denotes the interest of Rojas in their psychological development. This awareness and concern for human psychology goes hand in hand with the increasing interest in the mind that Spain witnesses during the Renaissance period, as attested by medical and philosophical works such as Juan Luis Vives's *Treatise on the Soul*. *Celestina* constitutes an important example of this 'psychologization' process, which soon begins to transpire in the literary works of Rojas' time and which is indeed an important piece in the puzzle of the rise of the early modern discourse. A piece that both Bakhtin's heteroglossia and the Theory of Mind concept can help us interpret in the context of early modern expressions of mind development. These two theories complement each other in that they help shed light on the inner workings and the evolution of the discursive phenomenon as related to human psychology.

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[15] Below is a list of some of the continuations:
– Feliciano de Silva's *Segunda Comedia de Celestina* (1534).
– Gaspar Gómez's *Tercera parte de la tragicomedia de Celestina* (1536).
– Sancho de Muñón's *Tragicomedia de Lysandro y Roselia, llamada Elicia y por otro nombre quarta obra y tercera Celestina* (1542).

[16] The first edition to do so was published in Álcala in 1569 (Piñero 14).

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 127-134

Perversion in Elfriede Jelinek's work

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Body Text;Body Text 2;Perversion means, literally, the alteration of something from its original course, meaning, or state to a distortion or corruption of what was first intended. It also means a sexual behavior or desire that is considered abnormal or unacceptable (Longman, 1995).

In Elfriede Jelinek's works this second meaning might seem more evident, where all relationships between men and women are marked by power, violence and humiliation and substitute for love. But it is in the first meaning where, we believe, Elfriede reveals herself as a writer, as a master of a perverse writing.

This paper offers a reflection over perversion in Elfriede Jelinek's Work. From Freudian conception of the work of art as an expression of fantasies and conflicts of the artist, we intend to analyse the perverse mastery of this author, through *what* she writes and *how* she writes.

We use three of her novels – *Die Liebhaberinnen* (1975), *Die Klavierspielerin* (1983) and *Lust* (1989) – and we invite you to a journey until the genesis of perversion as a deviance, an attempt to cure and path for restoring an identity precociously destroyed.

THE WRITER. THE WOMAN

Novelist, playwriter and essayist, Elfriede is well known for her controversial and bold attitudes and seen as one of the most important voices of the german-speaking cultural scene and of the resistent literature of the post-war.

Born in 1946 in Austria. At the age of 37 she wrote *The Piano Teacher*. This is her most famous work and admitedly the most autobiographic one.

The author talks about a cultural split since a very early age: her father was Jew with a modest background, son of one of the founders of the Austrian Social-Democracy, agnostic, "he hated the Church". He impersonated a fundamental part of the Left Vienna. Her mother belonged to a family of the high bourgeoisie, deeply catholic.

By the mother's will, Elfriede attended a nun's school since she was six years old and started to learn the piano.

Elfriede's mother got a strong education at a school where she met highly cultivated and gifted girls that used to play several instruments, sing and play. She aimed the same for her daughter.

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Elfriede finished her degree in organ and violin at Vienna's Consevatory. She also studied Art and Drama.

Elfriede's father died when she was 21 years old, in a sanatory. Elfriede lived with her mother until 2000, when she died.

About her parents she said:

> "They used to be terrible for each other. My father wanted to help me but he couldn't. I wanted to rescue him from my mother, but I was too young and I couldn't save him. After my mother's death I thought I'd free myself as I took care of her 'till the end. (...) I thought everything would solve for itself but strangely it didn't happen that way".

We will focus on *The Piano Teacher*, as this is the novel that reflects an internal reality that leads to a perverse solution.

THE PIANO TEACHER

The novel is about the story of Erika Kohut, a piano teacher of the Vienna Conservatory.

At 36 Erika shares the house and the bed with her mother. Trapped in the maternal object, as if she had never been born.

The only reference to the father in the book is when the two Kohut ladies leave him at the sanatory.

> "Her father promptly left, passing the torch to his daughter. Erika entered, her father exited" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 3).

The mother is always on control.

> "Erika visits a café once a month, but her mother knows which café, and she can ring her up there too" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 6).

> "Erika, the meadow flower. That's how she got her name: erica. Her pregnant mother had visions of something timid and tender. Then, upon seeing the lump of clay that shot out of her body, she promptly began to mold it relentlessly in order to keep it pure and fine. (...) She was destined, congenitally, for the subtleties of classical dance, song, music. A world-famous pianist – that is Mother's ideal" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 23-24).

The mother's insatisfaction and disillusion are projected on the child. This woman deprives her daughter from mother care, frustrates, hurts, humiliates her and takes full control of her daughter, aiming to shape her to her own image. Erika's goal is her mother's goal: to be a world-known pianist.

The mother becomes an agent of a primary castration. She keeps her child chained to her and can't bear her psychic birth.

Erika becomes her mother's instrument, an object, almost as a fetish, as Racamier suggests. And both of them encapsulate themselves in this powerful narcissistic couple. Narcissistic seduction might be the most violent and brutal aspect of the relationship between the pervert and his child.

The only possible relationship is with the mother, to whom she owes her own life.

One sex for two, a body for two, or even a life for two.

According to the Kleinian theory, the baby who lacks love will feel frustrated and then hate and rage feelings will arise. And this baby inflicts oral and anal-sadistic attacks to the bad object: the maternal breast. One of the baby's fantasies is that he travels to the mother's interior so he can steal and destroy those qualities he never felt. Following Klein, Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel brings this conception to perversion. According to her, to empty the mother's womb corresponds to a desire of finding an universe free of obstacles, with no attrition, where the child can easily enter whenever he wants. Then, psychic energy would flow in absolute freedom, similar to the pleasure principle mode.

In its turn, this aggressiveness brings a very archaic form of guilt, the Talion's fear, the maternal retaliation.

> "She knows that her mother's embrace will completely devour and digest her, yet she is magically drawn to it" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 118).

When mother and daughter are mixed together and hate prevails over love, mistrust and insecurities assume disturbing dimensions. Persecutory anxiety, typical in psychotic cases, translates to a threat of being attacked, devoured, poisoned and aniquilated by the object that was severely hit.

Sadism is usually a good mean to set one's limits, to determine a separation as a single subject. In Erika it transforms into auto-sadism: she cuts and needles, inflicting herself the pain she wanted to inflict to her mother.

The mother obliterates her daughter's identity and spoliates her desire. It is forbidden to Erika to exist as a separate subject, as a woman.

> "But that vanity of hers, that wretched vanity. (...) Let go, Mother snaps, hand it over! You've got to be punished for caring so much about trivial things. Life has punished you by ignoring you, and now your mother will punish you in the same way, ignoring you, even though you dress up and paint your face like a clown. Hand it over!" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 7).
>
> "We'll just keep to ourselves, won't we, Erika? We don't need anyone else" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 14).

On the other hand, the mother seduces her daughter, complimenting her and, that way, keeping her the closest she can. The mother convinces the daughter about the paternal nullity, denigrates the father's role, saying that only her daughter completes her and exulting the power that, together, they can reach.

> "The daughter is the mother's idol, and mother demands only a tiny tribute: Erika's life" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 26).

Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel says that "seduction is a determinant etiologic factor in perversions" (1984, p. 110).

> "Mother says: Erika is the best. That is the lasso she uses to rope her daughter" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 220).

The mother becomes the very image of perversion.

It is in this relationship where the feelings of megalomania and omnipotence grow. Erika's perverse behavior results from the fusion threat with the mother. She cuts herself to feel separated, to know her limits and fix them – she feels no pain, rather she feels alive.

> "This blade is destined for HER flesh. (...) As usual, there is no pain. SHE, however, cuts the wrong place, separating what the Good Lord and Mother Nature have brought together in unusual unity. (...) For an instant, the two flesh halves, sliced apart, stare at each other, taken aback at this sudden gap,which wasn't there before. They've shared joy and sorrow for many years, and now they're being separated" (Jelinek, 1999, pp. 86-87).

When she goes to the peep-shows she's looking for the man, she looks for the one who dissolves the unity with her mother; and she introduces the third element, reenacting the primal scene, when she spies the couples' intimacy.

Therefore, perversion acts like a barrier to psychotic anxiety.

Joyce McDougall (1972) sees the perverse sexuality as a child's game. And that scene between Erika and Klemmer, her pupil, is a good example:

> "In Erika's briefcase, a letter to the student rustles among the music scores. She will hand him the letter after scornfully telling him the score. (...)" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 187).

"Her most haunting wish – the adored Herr Klemmer reads – is for you to punish me. She would like Klemmer as a punishment. And in such a way that he ties her up with the ropes I've collected, and also the leather straps and even the chains! Hogtie her, bind her up as thouroughly as he can – solidly, intensely, artfully, cruelly, tormentingly, cunningly" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 215).

It is Erika, determining the rules of the game, who inflicts the humiliation and the castration she once felt. We believe that her true wish would be to abandon herself to the man, to become his object, with no freedom, being under the man's thumb and not her mother's, that's Jessica Benjamin's (1988) idea. It would be through this man's strength and power that Erika could feel the pleasure of being punished by her father, by the one that could separate her from the mother.

"She reveals to the man she has been longing to be hit for many years now. She assumes she has finally found the master she has been longing for" (Jelinek, 1999, p. 229).

WOMEN AS LOVERS

In *Women as Lovers* we see two women that look for their men and future husbands. They are single and they have one only objective: to get married.

All relationships are inscribed in the realm of the pure utilitarianism, of the 'relationships trade', where the woman is seen by the author as mere merchandise.

"brigitte has a body to offer.
apart from brigitte's body many other bodies are flooding the market at the same time. the only thing that positively stands by brigitte on this path, is the cosmetics industry. and the textile industry. brigitte has breasts, thighs, legs, hips and a snatch" (Jelinek, 1994, p. 10).

"paula no longer has a grade, such as even eating apples must have. paula has no market value any more" (Jelinek, 1994, p. 145).

There isn't any sort of investment.

Thus, there is a perversion of relationships and a perversion of femininity, where a deep despise for the Other takes place. And there is also the violence issue, of men's power over women and the transmission of these values from parents to their children.

"the women remain sales assistant or part-time sales assistant until their marriage, once they're married, that's the end of selling, the substitution is made without a hitch.
(...) but marriage always comes alone, without life.
(...) for the woman end of life and start of having children. (...) the women begin to hate their daughters and want to have them die as quickly as possible just as they once died, so: so they must get a man.
sometimes a daughter does not want to die as quickly as she should (...)" (Jelinek, 1994, pp. 12-15).

Marriage as death.

"and the daughter can hardly wait, to be allowed to die at last also, and the parents are already going shopping for the daughter's death: sheets and towels and dish cloths and a used refrigerator. then at least she'll stay dead but fresh" (Jelinek, 1994, p. 16).

It is a first approach or a first portrait, no longer of disenchantment, but of disaggregation, of dismemberment of what is called family.

In *Women as Lovers* Elfriede sketches a vision, highly ironical, of her country, in particular, and, in general, of the family structure and man's and woman's roles in western society. We also feel the

hate to the woman's constraints and the hatred in the relationships between men and women and between parents and children.

The recurrence to the deadly mother.

> "love unites, but hate divides. paula's momma hates paula because of the child in her stomach. (...) paula's momma has often enough hated her husband because of the children in her stomach (...). now momma has finally cracked, so that she not only hates her child outside her stomach in her daughter's stomach, but the daughter as well" (Jelinek, 1994, p. 114).

THE PIANO TEACHER

The *Piano Teacher*'s plot and Elfriede's life seem to merge. The oceanic, tentacular mother; the absent father; the music. And it is in this fusional relationship with her mother, lived by Elfriede as well, that the perverse aspects of the character start to show, in an extreme effort to separate. Always failed. But it was this novel, we believe, that allowed her to meet, in the most brutal and demolishing fashion, her own destructiveness.

It is in this sequence of works that *The Piano Teacher* becomes an element of transformation of the creative process. We think that by digging her own life story, namely with her mother, Elfriede becomes more caustic and her style more perverse. If in *Women as Lovers* the author builds an attack mostly to the life style and the clichés of western society, in *Lust* everything is massively destroyed and perverted.

LUST

What before she would critically describe with irony, here is debauched, ostensively and obscenely lowered, putrified. There is no hope.

> "At times the woman is dissatisfied with these defects that burden her life: husband and son" (Jelinek, 1992, p. 9).

The man humiliates, tortures and destroys.

> "This woman is now his luxury, he pours into her till she overfloweth" (Jelinek, 1992, p. 140).
>
> "The woman has to crook and angle her legs like a frog so that her husband, the examining magistrate, can look into the matter closely. (...) She is flooded and shat full him (...) the Man, that irreconcilable enemy of her sex (...). He sticks his right forefinger up her arsehole and, tits dangling, she kneels above him and scrubs. Hair in her eyes and mouth. Perspiration in her brow. Another person's saliva at the base of her throat. The pale killer whale there before her till the friendly light dies, night comes, and the animal can begin to lash her with his tail again" (Jelinek, 1992, p. 65).

The son, the future man.

> "The child knows a good deal about all this. The boy peeps grinning through the keyholes, spying out the joys of the home. (...) The child can't tell when he snuggles into the nest that Father built. (...) the child has a hungry mouthful of dirty talk to be stopped, talk concerning his mother and the blood that frequently stains her panties. The child knows everything. (...) And he will cling to the woman, graze upon her, bite her nipples to punish her for allowing Father to explore her tunnels and piping" (Jelinek, 1992, p. 25).

In this family only the violence, the power and humiliation take place. One cannot tell who's the father, the mother or the son. Everyone is corrupted. The family as a system is completely perverted.

"The family, this vulture, keeps itself as a pet" (Jelinek, 1992, p. 26).

In a defensive effort the devilish image of the mother is denied by the author and sticked to the man. The man *becomes* the one who abuses, persecutes, the one who takes hold of the women's work and life. At the bottom, the mother *is* the one who abuses, persecutes, the one that takes hold of the daughter's work and life. The evil mother expands to all characters. The mother is the man, the son and the woman, she is the author's destructive tendency.

In *Lust* everyone is mixed up and the relationships between them are nothing but the author's destructiveness and agressiveness towards her mother.

In *Lust* we see death as a struggle for life. The male man's son is killed by the mother. To kill the son (a future man) means to kill the mother. That is the ultimate meaning.

> "Comfortless he lies there under the eye of his mother, who comes to his bed and smooths the covers. (...) He is no doubt looking forward to growing up, like his father's member. Tenderly Mother kisses her little boat sailing around the world. Then she takes a plastic bag, slips it over the boy's head, and draws it tight at the bottom so that the child's breath will perish in peace. (...) But no, the child still wants to live. Then the son drifts out into the open waters where he is immediately quite in his element (Mummy!) (...).
>
> The mother carries the child, and then, when she grows tired, drags him along behind her. (...) Now the woman is at the stream, and the next moment her son sinks in, contented. (...)
>
> The water has taken hold of the child, and bears him on and away, a good deal will remain of him for a long time in this cold. (...)
>
> But now rest a while!" (Jelinek, 1992, pp. 206-207).

A PERVERSE STYLE

As we said, it was also our aim to put in evidence the perverse aspects of Elfriede's writing – *how* she writes.

In *Women as Lovers* Elfriede adopts a very original style, repudiating conventional phrasal structures and rules, the text with no format, always using minuscules, which reflects how trivial and mediocre the characters and their relationships are. The very rare sentences entirely in capital letters work as a chock-stimuli. Repetition and puns are also relevant aspects of this work.

The narrative in *The Piano Teacher* is more conventional. However, some references to the main character are in capital letters (SHE, HER), revealing the greatness and omnipotence in Erika and of the author herself projected in the character. So the mother made her believe, confirming her value over everyone, even over her father. In this novel, the author transforms the reader into the third element so desired by the perverse, building a mechanism that allows the introduction of the other that sees and spies the intimacy.

Lust is where Elfriede achieves the mastery of her literary skills.

She says:

> "It is the book I've always wanted to write. (...) It's natural that for some people it is nothing but a bunch of puns and play on words. But in literature I've always wanted to reach this extreme linguistic concentration, which is based on the linguistic mechanisms of lord/slave relationship. (...) And I've expressed it in pure language. (...) It's an amalgam of linguistic formations where male porn language – and porn language is exclusively male – is analysed and denounced".

Elfriede was looking for a feminine pornographic language, and it is here where stands her perverse mode concerning creation, taking over images and patterns of male porn writing. Because "a feminine language of sexuality cannot exist", she says. According to a portuguese literary critic, João Barrento, "inversion is her technic, her writing is the total perversion".

In *Lust* we question ourselves about the barrier's resistence that perversion performs over psychosis. On one hand, we see the book's tragic end as the emergence of psychosis: the mother who kills her son, so that she can avoid death. Then we ask if perversion as a defense really fails. On the other hand, in this work, Elfriede's writing is highly perverse.

> "The pervert (...) will have an imperative need to impose his creative work. He will amaze the spectator, the listener or the reader with his intelectual or verbal acrobatics, with his technical virtuosity, with his ingenuity and his cleverness in formal expression, bringing him the sanctimonious admiration that his mother had once lavished on him, thus confirming his role of the adequate sexual partner and the correlative devaluation of the father. Thus our magician seeks, in deluding the public, to preserve his own illusion" (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1974, p. 356).

It is the character's anal triumph that convinces her that she is the best.

Hence the repetition of the themes in the various works, where relationships become deadlier and hate is exponentially multiplied.

Thus, the author places her destructiveness and agressiveness into the stories, locking them up in the books and attaching them to those characters. There is a sort of release, a discharge of internal tension, without which the existence would be unbeareable. That is what Freud message was all about: the work of art allows, somehow, the accomplishment of some fantasies and desires of the artist. And it is her own writing the way that Elfriede found to protect herself. The writing acts for her not only as shield, but as a weapon as well, as a way to value herself.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 135-145

Following Narcissus traces on Sá-Carneiro's work

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> "The light in the room was, in effect, a projection of itself, it was still light, of course, but the truth is that the marvellous thing illuminating us did not seem like light. It seemed like something else, some sort of new fluid. I'm not talking nonsense here, I'm simply describing a real sensation, for we did not so much see that light as feel it. And I don't think it would be going too far to say that it did not so much affect our sight as our sense of touch. If our eyes had been suddenly torn from us, we would still have been able to see it" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 32).

This is the story of a journey through the pathways on which words first encounter the hands and eyes of those who read them. It is a tale of the erotic moment of fusion between the pages where the text is weavened and the longing skin of the reader, giving birth to the numerous readings edifiable around and about a given work. This presentation is the fruit of such an encounter.

Mário de Sá-Carneiro[1] (1890-1916) was a poet and Portuguese author whose *oeuvre*, charged with a unique magnetism, is both seductive and fascinating. The solar light that shines forth from it threatens to hurt our eyes as we look unto it, although we find ourselves unable to turn our sight the other way. And, not unlike children trying to gaze upon the dawning daybreak, dazzled by the light, shadows, shapes and tonalities is all that we are able to perceive. This immense light is at the same time seductive and startling. In this world nothing is univocal and all its shapes and shadows are presided by a common notion of *mystery*.

Besides the image of light, in this author another fundamental image is to be found: *the mirror*. His works seem to *mirror* life itself. I underline mirror because everything takes place in a mirror-like game: the author, lost in himself as if he himself was a maze, looks for himself in and through writing, essaying to unveil *the other* through the reflection of words. However, just as Narcissus, the mirror – instead of bringing about the desired encounter – brings the impossibility of reuniting himself with that other that is an *other-of-himself*.

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1 Mário de Sá-Carneiro was one of the major figures of Portuguese literature in the first half of XX century. Along with Fernando Pessoa (with whom he exchanged more than 220 letters after leaving to Paris), Almada-Negreiros, and other Portuguese writers and painters, he wrote for *Orpheu*, a magazine of poetry and artistic prose influenced by the European Avant-Garde. Although he belonged to the Portuguese Modernistic Movement, he was profoundly influenced by Decadentism and Symbolism.

Four were the main themes that, in my previous study of the works of Sá-Carneiro, continually showed themselves and drawn me to the myth of Narcissus: *the double*, *the feminine*, *the circulation of desire* and, finally, the *thanatical triumph*. In this presentation I shall address the first theme – *the double*.

The connection between the double and Narcissism was pointed out early on in the history of Psychoanalysis. Traceable back to Otto Rank who, as soon as 1914, dedicated a study to this subject entitled *The Double*. In his analysis, Otto Rank (1932/1973[2]) states that the authors in whose works the double is present show several common points. First, they all have what Rank called a certain state of pathological personality, which seems to be beyond the neurotic personality commonly existing in each artist. In addition to suffering from nervous diseases, they also consumed enthusiastically substances capable of producing changes in consciousness: alcohol and drugs. In these artists, this psychological predisposition for nervous and mental problems appears to have originated an unusually strong interest in themselves, being focused on their feelings and anguishes.

In 1919 Freud dedicated several pages to the matter in his essay *The Uncanny*. Freud (1919/1981) refers to an uncanny feeling, linked to something we had ever known and which is familiar to us. Although, this uncanny sensation triggers feelings of anxiety and surprise because it is linked to a repressed content trying to return to conscious. The appearance of a double causes a relatively constant return of the identical and similar, caused by the repetition of the same characters, thoughts and behaviours, leading to the uncanny feeling.

However, the first source to establish in a direct fashion the aforementioned connection was in fact the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid (cc.3-8/2006) emphasizes the *dual* nature of Narcissus story, even more than the idea of beauty to which he is usually promptly associated with. Soon Narcissus became conscious of his double nature: first through his name, Narcissus, which is just another form of his mother's name, Liriope (the flower of *leirion*)[3]; second through Echo's voice, a double of his own voice; finally through the reflection of his image, which he recognized as a perfect *other* and by whom he fell in love.

Like Narcissus, Sá-Carneiro wasn't able to recognize himself on *the others* that replied from inside the mirror. Others-of-himself that in his identitarian quest could not be ignored. In this way he turned his alter egos into fictional characters and his own fiction into his world inside the mirror. And there, resorting to the figure of the double, he staged the drama of the *I* and the *other*.

Coming into being either through a game of unfolding[4] or a game of identifications, the presence of the double is usually to be found at the beginning of the narrative. It then continues to increase in intensity up to the point in which the very existence of these wraith-like figures takes control of the plot, leading it to the only possible outcome: madness, frequently followed by the death of the main character.

I shall now mention *Lúcio's Confession* (*A Confissão de Lúcio*, 1913), one of the author's most charismatic works. The plot can be summarized in the following way: Lúcio, the protagonist, sentenced for the murder of his friend Ricardo and having served his prison time, decides to write a confession depicting all the singular events that led into his friend's death. Ten years earlier, Lúcio (a young author) went to live in Paris. After his arrival he met a group of young artists, accompanied by his friend Gervásio Vila-Nova, an enigmatic and fascinating sculptor. One night they went to a *soirée* in the house of a mysterious woman, called the American woman. There Gervásio introduces Lúcio to Ricardo, a well known poet, and they immediately become great friends. Meanwhile, Lúcio returns to Lisbon and the contact between them diminishes. After some time apart, Ricardo also returns to Lisbon but, this time, accompanied by Marta, his beautiful and mysterious wife, of which Lúcio

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2 There are two slightly different versions of Otto Rank's study on the Double: the first one, *Der Doppelgänger*, was published in 1914 by Imago; the second one is a french version, entitled *Don Juan: Une étude sur le Double*, published by Denoël in 1932. In this paper I chose the second version.

3 As Julia Kristeva (1983/1987) suggested, "[...] the lily will eventually be metamorphosed, as the myth tells it, into that other flower of moist areas, the funeral narcissus" (p.103).

4 The term unfolding is used here in the sense of opening up an object revealing all its faces, like the plane representation of a cube.

would later become a lover. Eventually he discovers through his friend a startling reality: Marta is in fact a fictional character created by Ricardo, through which he's able to experience a true intimacy with the important friends of his life. It is then that Ricardo drags Lúcio to his home and, in a moment of extreme uneasiness, shoots Marta so that she will stop interfering with their friendship. Alas, Marta is volatized in the air and it is Ricardo's dead body that falls on the ground. Due to the unlikely nature of the scene, Lúcio is charged with murder.

In this narrative the game of unfolding takes place since the beginning: several striking characters (Gervásio and the American woman) appear in an explosion of light and color only to vanish as quickly as they came, giving place to new characters which bear several of their characteristics (Ricardo and Marta).

Gervásio represents more than just the instrument through which Lúcio and Ricardo met. In fact, he is the main responsible for Lúcio's inclusion in the artistic groups of Paris. Something of Gervásio's meek and intimate nature seems to linger on Ricardo, and later on, end up reappearing in Sérgio Warginsky, the Russian diplomat whose name is an anagram of Gervásio Vila-Nova's name[5], the sculptor that initially accompanied Lúcio and became his "[...] constant companion" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 19), as if Lúcio only could bare perfect communions with his friends. The fiery element present in Gervásio (which is shown to us as "[...] a superior being, there was no doubt about it, one of those people who remains engraved on our memory, who troubles and obsesses us. He was fire, pure fire!" p. 20) seems to ignite in him its combustion, spreading through the American woman and reaching Ricardo, through Marta. The incandescent nature of the work is present from the beginning until the end, when the fire burns out, revealing death.

Gervásio fascinated with his image and with his aura which, in fact, were one, forcing others to notice him: "He was that sort of man you look at in the street and say: he must be someone important" (p. 20). And he was a seducer, "women utterly adored him. They would watch in fascination whenever he wandered, tall and arrogant, into a café..." (p. 20). But his beauty seems to have something feminine and mysterious, something that simultaneously enchanted and disturbed.

> There was something disquieting about his tall, gaunt, angular body, with its dual and contradictory suggestion of both a hysterical, narcotic effeminacy and a sallow asceticism. When his long hair fell back from his face to reveal a broad, firm but terribly pale brow, it evoked images of hairshirts and extreme abstinence; yet when it fell forward in waves over his forehead, it evoked only tenderness, the troubling tenderness of golden ecstasies and subtle kisses. [...] When his forehead was concealed by his hair or by a hat, there was nothing enigmatic about his face at all, quite the contrary. Oddly enough though, there *was* something mysterious about his body, something that made one think of sphinxes, perhaps, on moonlight nights. It was not his actual physiognomy that etched itself upon one's memory, but rather his strange personality. (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 19).

The disquieting feminine element present in Gervásio, which made women look at him in a jealously way ("[...] the way women look at some exquisitely beautiful and bejewelled member of their own sex", p. 20), seems to be also present in Sérgio Warginsky's exacerbated sensuality.

> Sérgio Warginsky was a beautiful young man of twenty-five. Tall and slender, he reminded me physically of Gervásio Vila-Nova who, shortly before, had brutally taken his own life by throwing himself under a train. Sérgio's red lips, wanton and tender, parted to reveal teeth women must have longed to kiss. His reddish-blonde hair, parted in the middle, fell gracefully over his forehead and his golden-shadowed eyes never left Marta – or so I was to remember in retrospect. In fact, he, more than Marta, seemed the one truly feminine presence among us (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 62).

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5 As Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) noticed, if we transform the *y* into an *i*, we can see the same letters present in both names.

Gervásio's gradual disappearance coincides with the beginning of the friendship between Lúcio and Ricardo. We may suggest his removal was necessary so the protagonists could initiate such an intimate relationship, as if they were soul mates. However, Gervásio is still present in a very discreet way in Ricardo, both in his extravagances ("Ricardo came up with equally bizarre revelations on other occasions too, revelations slightly reminiscent of Vila-Nova's pretentious utterances", pp. 42-43) and in his genius ("[...] he was a superior being, brilliant and disquieting", p. 46). Somehow, Gervásio's features which most impressed Lúcio seem to reappear in Ricardo.

Nevertheless, if Sérgio Warginsky is clearly Gervásio's double, the same doesn't happen with Ricardo. Here, what seems to take place is a relationship of identifications between both characters and the unfolding of some of Gervásio's features into Ricardo. This unfolding makes us wondering if aren't they emanations of something else... Perhaps projections of the ideal that Lúcio (and also Mário de Sá-Carneiro) was seeking for and that only in literature could be found.

A much more interesting case of unfolding can be found in Marta. Since the very beginning one can perceive the same game of identifications between her and the American woman: the same burning perverse desire, the same sensual and longing flesh. The American woman "[...] had a beauty that was redolent of mystery and dreams. She was tall and thin with a long face and golden skin and extraordinary hair of a startling fiery red. Hers was a beauty that inspired awe" (p. 21). She is representative of the sexualisation of the senses and defender of the voluptuousness as art. She is vibrating and has a very special golden shine of her own. The American woman with her bare feet with golden fingernails appears covered in a "[...] closely woven mesh of metallic threads [...] that fused together to produce an appearance of shimmering fire, a fire that contained all the colors in the world alternately colliding in shrill harmony or merging to produce whistling, starry tumults of reflected light." (p. 30). So would Marta be, "[...] the statuesque lines of her legs, which her very open shoes showed to be almost bare but for the curious stockings she wore, made out of metallic threads that crisscrossed to form large diamonds through which her bare flesh showed" (p. 76).

Once again the situation between Gervásio and Ricardo repeats itself: Marta isn't the double of the American woman. However, it is noteworthy the same game of similarities occurring between them, especially when one vanishes so that the other could appear. Something of the American woman is remaining in Marta. Something that preceded her in the text. Perhaps it is the legacy of fire that led the American woman and will also lead Marta. However, if despite her brief appearance in the novel we can say it was the fire she represented, Marta would represent only the flame. A flame kindled by her creator, inflamed by the will of his desire and extinct when he decided to.

Marta is more than an extension of the American woman. She is Ricardo's double, himself a man. Ricardo is unable to maintain any friendship due to the permanently sexualized nature of his affection, while at the same time aspiring to a true form of communion with Lúcio, his soul-mate. He then envisions the creation of a woman, Marta, to ease the relationship between them. Marta is fruit of Ricardo's longing for Lúcio, another man who, in fact, is nothing but a reflection of himself. As Lúcio and Ricardo are themselves also doubles of one another. They become intimate friends, knowing one another as each one knows himself, sympathetic like nobody else towards each other's anguishes and aspirations, as well as their most intimate desires. But Ricardo doesn't create himself as a true other, as one which is known through its uniqueness and longed for in its singularity. Ricardo is the image the mirror reflects. An image that, although not a copy, is still just a picture of the same self.

Lúcio is an author who wrote several novels and Ricardo is a well known poet. Both artists, the link between them is not mere coincidence; their relationship is based on literature (Martins, 1994). Lúcio is aware of this deep union and expressed it in the outset of their friendship: "We had risen to a higher plan, we hovered above life. We could have grown drunk on pride, had we wanted to – but we suffered so much, so very much. Our one refuge was our work" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 40).

As to when Lúcio and Ricardo became doubles, it seems that this relationship was established since the very beginning, as if they had always known one another, having only been temporarily apart.

> Within a month, Ricardo and I had become not merely inseparable companions but close and sincere friends, between whom there were no misunderstandings nor even secrets.
>
> [...] Ah, how different this new friendship was, how much more spontaneous, affectionate!
>
> [...] My conversations with Ricardo – an interesting point this – were, from the start, conversations from the soul rather than the usual conversations intellectuals have.
>
> For the first time, in fact, I had met someone capable of descending, even if only a little way, into the unvisited recesses of my spirit, which for me were also the most sensitive and painful. And, as he told me later, he felt the same.
>
> Not that we were happy, oh no! Our lives were tormented by desires, misunderstandings, obscure sufferings (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, pp. 39-40).

As noticed by Fernando Cabral Martins (1994), along the narrative Lúcio will ultimately resemble Ricardo in so many ways, that he will repeat what before appeared his friend's eccentricities. In one of the major moments of the novel, Ricardo will say he has never felt affection, *only tenderness*. For him the greatest friendship would simply be translated into the greatest tenderness. Later, at the time of his escape to Paris, Lúcio will also say: "My affections always found expression in feelings of tenderness..." (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 103). One of Ricardo's characteristics was "the physical sensation of the soul" and later on, in Paris, Lúcio will use almost identical words: "I've always experienced the moral sufferings of my soul as physical pain" (p. 100). And pride, one of Ricardo's distinctive features, will also manifest itself in Lúcio in a striking way: "I have never been able to forgive a lack of pride" (p. 102).

This desire to possess the other by blending into him and the consequential unfolding of the self is magnificently expressed in the *threefold kiss scene*.

> Thus, on a summer afternoon, we were having tea on the terrace when Marta suddenly – in a gesture that could, in fact, have been taken as a simple, playful joke – demanded that I kiss her on the forehead, as punishment for something I had said to her.
>
> I hesitated, turned bright red, but since Ricardo insisted, I bent over, tremulous with fear, and just barely brushed her skin with my lips.
>
> And Marta said:
>
> "Do you call that a kiss! You mean you still don't know how to kiss properly? You should be ashamed of yourself! Come on Ricardo, you show him how to do it".
>
> And laughing, my friend got up, came over to me, took my face in his hands... and kissed me.
>
> Ricardo's kiss was the same, exactly the same, as my lover's kisses, it had the same colour, the same unsettling effect. Their kisses felt to me identical (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 86).

In this instant the three characters become perfectly concatenated, as if through the kiss – symbol of the fusion act – they became One. Kiss and desire move freely between Lúcio, Ricardo and Marta. First, at the request of Ricardo, Marta kisses Lúcio exploring the path so that the kiss between Ricardo and Lúcio might happen (already without the need of the double and mediator). And this last kiss has the same flavour of Marta's kisses because it is, in fact, the same kiss. One more it is Lúcio's disturbance what will strengthen the desire he felt and which is socially censured. That is what several authors (Lancastre, 1992; Lopes, 1987; Martins, 1994; Quadros, 1988) have referred to as homosexual drive. The kiss of three represents the key scene where, for a moment, the shroud of mystery is attenuated, summarizing the plot. This is when Ricardo's so far utopian desire – *the sexualisation of friendship* – is achieved.

Here we face the genesis of Marta, the fruit of Ricardo's desire to reach Lúcio through a woman that will enable their union. Marta is one of the vertices of the hypothetical love triangle (Lúcio-Marta-Ricardo). However, as pointed out by Carla Roque e Cunha (1996), her autonomy exists only

as a physical presence to the extent that Marta and Ricardo share the same psyche. Amid the fog that inhabits the work, a closer observation will show the shape of the triangle to be lost because it was nothing but a mirage: Ricardo desires Lúcio and Lúcio desires Marta. Marta is nothing more than the mediating space of the desire of both men. Although the question arises: is it an unidirectional or a mutual desire? Marta is the bridge, the link that allows the union between them and also the physical space where the union takes place. She is clearly Ricardo's double, emanated from his desire and an instrument of his will. However, Lúcio accepts Marta and with this movement of acceptance also accepts Ricardo's desire. Without refusals or questions, after all "our souls understood each other perfectly, insofar as two souls can understand each other" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 47). Because the desire belongs to both. Because Marta does not exist as a woman: she only exists as an instrument that makes possible the union of both men. Marta is the fusional space that has been long sought. In this regard another important moment is the scene in which Lúcio kisses Marta's bruised skin caused by another lover. In that moment, a monstrous feeling grows within Lúcio for having also possessed the male body of her lover.

> Indeed, whilst it wounded my very soul to know she was possessed by another lover, it also excited me, inflamed my desire...
>
> Yes – the truth flickered before me in livid purple – that splendid, glorious body had given itself to three men, three males had covered it, profaned it, drunk of it. Only three? Perhaps a whole multitude. And even while that idea was still lacerating my mind, I was also filled by a perverse desire for it to be true.
>
> When I clutched her convulsively to me, it was in fact as if, with my monstrous kisses, I was also possessing all the male bodies that had passed through hers. I became obsessed with finding on her flesh some mark, some wound left by love, some trace of one of her other lovers.
>
> And, at last, one triumphant day, I found a great lack bruise on her left breast. On an impulse, I glued my mouth furiously to that mark, sucking, biting, tearing at it (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 92).

Lúcio seems divided between disgust and desire. And, to some extent, rather than loathing him out, it contributes to inflame the fire of desire. Where are these feelings of revulsion and disgust coming rom? Is it from Marta's progressive masculinisation? Is it from knowing that her body shared by Ricardo, Sérgio Warginsky and himself? Or is it from knowing her body she has no existence at all, only being an emanation of Ricardo? All this increases the desire for perversity.

> Anyway, what if my feelings of repugnance towards Marta's lovely body had the same origin? What if the lover about whom I knew nothing were someone who, had I known him, would fill me with disgust? That could well be the case, an accurate presentiment, especially since – as I have already mentioned – when I possessed her I often had the monstrous feeling that I was also possessing the masculine body of that lover.
>
> But the truth is that, deep down, I was almost certain I was still deceiving myself, that the man involved was very different, that the reasons behind my mysterious feelings of repugnance were far more complex. Or rather, that even if I met her lover and disliked him, that would not be the cause of my nausea.
>
> In fact her flesh did not repel me in the sense that it made me feel sick, her flesh filled me rather with a sense of monstrousness, of strangeness. I felt sickened by her body in the same way I had always felt sickened by epileptics, madmen, witches, seers, kings, popes – people marked by mystery... (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, pp. 99-100).

Therefore, what disgusts Lúcio is more than knowing she was possessed by other men, even if these men cause him deep aversion. What is hidden here is knowing that Marta has no existence as a woman, she only is a representation of Ricardo's feminine side. She is the stylization of his deep

feminine sensitivity coupled with the desire of being the *other*. And when he tries to remember her, it is another image he recalls: "When I thought of her, I could never really imagine her. Her features slipped away from me the way faces of people in dreams do. And, sometimes, when I struggled to remember them, the only features I managed to call up were Ricardo's, doubtless because he was the person closest to her" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 82). Here is the unknown factor he speaks about, and if he refers to it, it is because somehow he recognizes it. And behind it is disgust.

Along with the masculinisation of Marta comes the progressive femininity of Ricardo. Lúcio had already noticed a change in his face and traits since his return from Paris.

> But how he had changed in the year we had spent apart!
>
> His sharp features had softened, acquired a satiny – indeed, a womanly – sheen and, even more startling, was the fact that his hair was not as dark as it had been, as if its colour had been diluted. Perhaps the fundamental difference I noticed in my friend's physiognomy lay in that change alone – *it had become more diffuse*. That was it, that was my overall impression, that his physical features had become somehow scattered, diminished.
>
> His voice had changed too, and his gestures: everything about him, in fact, had grown more shadowy (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 59).

As Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) noticed, two important aspects seem to arise here. First, Ricardo's femininity: the mitigation of his traits, gestures, voice and movements, along with the appearance of Marta, his double. The second aspect to notice is the fiery element that seems to travel through the whole plot. Since the beginning of the narrative we are faced with the red hair of the American woman and, later, with Marta's very blond hair. Also Ricardo's hair seems to become lighter, change its colour. The "Orgy of Fire"[6] was the performance that celebrated the meeting of Lúcio and Ricardo and, at the instant Lúcio met Marta, floods of light illuminated the room. The fire seems to arise here as an apotheosis of all sensations in which, even affection are supposed to be sexualized. Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) noted the fire works as a metonymy of total light, leading us to *Lúcio*'s name[7]. The light travels throughout the narrative and *Embers* and *The Flame* are titles of Ricardo's and Lúcio's works, respectively. Symbolically, *Lúcio* brings us to light, but also to lucidity, and even hallucination[8]. And isn't *Lúcio's Confession* a novel moving between lucidity and hallucination? The lucidity of the demand for the self based on hallucination as the unique way of carrying out. And isn't Marta an hallucination? In a very insightful remark, Carla Roque e Cunha (1996) explains that the study of *Lúcio's Confession* (and by extent all of Sá-Carneiro's works) represents a true challenge: how can we possibly enlighten something which already is pure light?

Ricardo is the author of *Embers* and, along the plot, is writing *Diadem*, which is presented as his masterpiece. We may think it was the last verse he wrote when Marta was intimately with Lúcio for the first time. And shortly after, when Ricardo looked to the mirror, he noticed to have lost his reflection, as if the *other* inhabiting inside the mirror had materialized and gone to live its own life.

> "You know, Lúcio, I had the most bizarre hallucination today. It was in the afternoon, it must have been about four o'clock. I'd just written the last line of my book. I left the study and went up to my room. I happened to glance in the wardrobe mirror but *I wasn't there*! It's true. I saw everything around me reflected in the mirror, *but I could not see my own image*... You can't imagine my amazement... the mysterious feeling that swept through me... But do you know something? It wasn't a feeling of terror, *it was a feeling of pride*" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 78).

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6 Lúcio and Ricardo met themselves in a *soirée* given by the American woman. "Orgy of Fire" was the name of the performance they were invited to attend that evening.

7 There is a clear proximity between the terms Lúcio and light (from the latin word *lux*).

8 The latin term *luci* is present both in lucidity and in hallucination. This aspect was first noticed by Lino Machado (1990) and then by Fernando Cabral Martins (1994).

The conclusion of the book and the love consummation between Lúcio and Marta happen at the same time. In turn, shortly before his sudden return to Paris, Lúcio wrote a play entitled *The Flame*. Despite the fact that the representation had already been scheduled, the sudden change of the last act triggered a discussion with the entrepreneur who refused to take it to the scene with the last-minute changes. As Fernando Cabral Martins (1994) brought to our attention, Ricardo's *Diadem* and Lúcio's *The Flame* are metaphors for Marta, and the sudden changes of the last act predict an also unusual outcome.

Lúcio's play was called *The Flame* and, like the play, Marta was also a flame consumed by fire and, at the time of her disappearance, it was the same fire that also took her: "Marta had vanished, silently evaporated, like a flame being extinguished..." (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 115). In turn, *Diadem* represents the female royalty. According to Fernando Cabral Martins (1994), in its circular shape is represented Marta's enfolding which results from Ricardo's desire. The diadem is also associated with gold – and to Ricardo, the gold of the body is representative of the soul – which, to him, has a physical representation. Thus, Marta is also a metaphor for the soul or even the very soul.

> Narciso do Amaral had at last agreed to perform for us his concertante entitled Beyond, which he had completed many weeks before but which, until then, only he had heard.
>
> He sat down at the piano. His fingers struck the keys...
>
> My eyes had automatically fixed on Ricardo's wife, who had sat down in an armchair towards the back of the room, in a corner, so that I alone was in the position of being able to see both her and the pianist.
>
> [...] And then, little by little, as the music grew in marvellous beauty, I saw – yes, actually saw – the figure of Marta slowly fade away, dissolve, note by note, until she had disappeared completely. *All that remained before my horrified eyes was the empty armchair...* (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 67).

Marta's image had been dissipated. But how? Why? Has Lúcio been a victim of an illusion? The answer is given in the next instant by Ricardo:

> "I found the music quite extraordinary, it aroused emotions in me of an intensity I have never before experienced. It stirred up, as nothing before ever has, troubling, disquieting feelings. It was like the rending of the veil between us and the Beyond, so overwhelming were its harmonies... It was as if everything in me that constitutes my soul had to condense down in order to vibrate in sympathy with it... I felt it gather anxiously inside me, in a globe of light..." (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 67).

Here we face the key to Marta's mysterious disappearance because she was Ricardo's soul – or part of it – she needed to join him at that moment, to enjoy the wonderful music that was being played. But this is not the only moment in which Marta is described as Ricardo's soul. Also in the climax of the novel Ricardo made his own "confession".

> One night, though, one fantastic sleepless night, I finally succeeded! I found Her, yes, I created Her, *created* Her. She is mine alone, do you understand? Mine alone. We understand each other so completely that Marta is like a part of my own soul. We think the same way, we feel the same way. We are Us. And from that night I could feel, really feel, your affection for me vibrate inside me, I could reciprocate your affection by ordering Her to be yours! *But when she embraced you, it was me embracing you*. I satisfied my love for you. I won! And when I possessed her, I felt that I possessed *in her* the friendship I owed to you, the way others feel their affections in their souls. When I found her, you see, it was as if my soul, by becoming sexualised, had become matter. *And thus I possessed you physically with my spirit!* That is my triumph... my insuperable triumph! My magnificent secret! (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 113).

Marta is then metaphor for the soul, but also metaphor for literature (Fernando Cabral Martins, 1994). Since, for Sá-Carneiro, the soul is the subject of art. Marta was the brainchild of Ricardo and

the moment she gave herself to Lúcio coincided with the *terminus* of *Diadem*, his masterpiece. She was the bridge built to overcome the chasm of distance separating both men, allowing their union. However, she unavoidably separates them. The bridge was materialized into soul to fulfil the wishes of the self but, as any double, it enjoys a relative autonomy. Therefore Marta, although identical to the self, ends up being different. That is why the outcome seems fatal. The game of doubles – and, with Lúcio, Ricardo and Marta, multiples – is a lethal herald. And death expects them... Marta has to die so that Ricardo can prove his affection to Lúcio. This is the outcome of the narrative: Ricardo fires on Marta, but the body that falls dead on the floor is not hers (which leaks away in the air like a flame is extinguished) but Ricardo's. And, at Lúcio's feet, the revolver...

> We had arrived. Ricardo gave the door a brutal shove. It opened.
>
> Marta was standing by a window on the other side of the room, leafing through a book.
>
> The unfortunate woman barely had time to turn round. Ricardo pulled out a revolver he had concealed in his jacket pocket and, before I could do anything, before I could make a move, he fired on her at point-blank range.
>
> Marta fell senseless to the floor. I had not moved from where I stood on the threshold.
>
> And then he Mystery happened... the fantastic Mystery of my life.
>
> To my amazement, to my grief, the person lying stretched out by the window was not Marta, no, it was my friend, it was Ricardo. And at my feet, yes, at my feet, lay his revolver, still smoking!
>
> Marta had vanished, silently evaporated, like a flame being extinguished (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 115).

By returning Marta to her nonexistence, it is the actual Ricardo who coincided with her that disappears. By removing a part of his soul, the other part falls dead. Also Lúcio's soul ends up perishing: "[...] numb now to life and to dreams, with nothing more to hope for and no desires [...]" (Sá-Carneiro, 1913/1993, p. 15). Lúcio was so deeply identified with Ricardo that, by loosing him, looses himself.

Ricardo and Lúcio's dilemmas are the dilemmas of the self in Sá-Carneiro: a being that doesn't find itself in itself, that doesn't satisfy its own needs, that searches endlessly without finding itself. A being that casts itself into several selves without being able to appease itself nor, at the same time, willing to renounce to its quest. Because being what it is doesn't suffice. There is another, the *other*, who at the same time cannot be reached rather is also unrelinquishable. Lúcio and Ricardo manage to abolish the divisive barriers that the skin edifies. Ricardo could be Narcissus, fascinated by the image of the other that is the image of the self. Narcissus ascribes life to the reflection, turning him into a perfect being. So does Ricardo. And both aspired to the impossible – a relationship of absolute intimacy – whose price to pay was identical to both: death as the only way to eternally seal this bond with the other.

In *Lúcio's Confession* we witness a curious case of unfolding: the double seems to transform itself into the *triple*, personified in the Lúcio-Ricardo-Marta triangle. Through the gathering of these characters a sense of unity is sought for which only coalescence – the annihilation of all differences in a construct in which three people become one – would be able to provide. But this coalescence implies that no longer will an I or an other exist, but something which is neither the *same* nor the *other*...

In his work *Narcissisme de Vie, Narcissisme de Mort* (1983), André Green makes a few remarks about this unfolding of the self. André Green mentions that the One is indivisible but yet unfoldable. Operations such as summing, subtraction, multiplication or division are possible, in a kind of "identity mathematics" which we shall call "Narcissus' Mathematics".

To what binds and unbinds the One? *To another* and *from another*. In this way, the double – the unfolding in the *other* – would be given by the expression 1+1=2. Here we have represented the relationship between Ricardo and Marta, or, if we wish to call to mind the relationship triangle in *Lúcio's Confession*, for which the designation of triple was proposed, we would have the expression 1+(1+1)=3, where one could recognize Lúcio, Ricardo and Marta, in that order, as terms of the equation.

In what does the unfolding of the other's self differ from the original in each one of us? Perhaps the latter would be more closely associated with what Nicolas Abraham (s.d., quoted by Green, 1983) named the dual unit: the one is born out of the genetic recombination of two halves which together form the biological unit. The expression would be 1x1=1, which doesn't result in a duplicate but in a being that ultimately is the recombination of two beings acting as one (the dual unit). The One, as it multiplies itself, would produce the Unit. From this "two in one" all the subsequent development will take place: the separation and loss of the object that will give place to the One. One for whom the separation from the Other, division in essence, doesn't amount to a death sentence since 1:1=1. The threat of disintegration isn't present here because the One doesn't find itself unfolded, dissolved in the Other, as it happens in the unfolding, where 1+1=2 or, 1+(1+1)=3. In both cases, any of the above results – both the 2 (the double) as the 3 (the triple) – have lost their integrity, the unity of the self. In a nutshell, they are no longer a One as they became something else. The death (subtraction) of the double and the triple will always imply the death of the *self*, coalescent with the *other*, as 2-2=0 (or 3-3=0).

If we take into account that in narcissism, the self wants to be loved as its own ideal, the nature of love that the self nourishes to itself should be a closed system, not allowing space for the object. Locked in a circuit where the self unfolds in lover and loved, that is indicative of this self-sufficient love and of a dually split unit (1:1=1) or of an unitarian multiplied unit (1x1=1). However, it should be noted the psychological paradox in these mathematical expressions: there is division that does not divide and multiplication that does not multiply – at the end of the operation the unit is in the same way that was at the beginning. André Green (1983) indicates that the cause of this is the need for unity at all costs.

But if One is the Unity, why is there this state of incompleteness that is to be found both in Narcissus and Sá-Carneiro, reflected in their own fictional characters? If the One is made of two halves, each one of these halves encompasses the status of division and incompleteness and, therefore, each half is by itself a unit inside the One formed by the union of two halves. It is thus understandable that each half has itself a double identity as it is both a half and, at the same time, a whole unit. This fundamental cleavage – condition inherent to any human being – tends to (and tends *solely* to) nullify itself in the blending process. That explains why in the narcissistic relationship that blending of oneself with the Other is sought for, although unable to embrace the different, what one looks for in the Other ends up not being different at all, but the Same. However, true unity is the result from dual unity, meaning, the couple, two distinct units that interconnect themselves to form a new unit. The choice of the object is the choice of the other-other, different from me. It is the choice of the different. With the double, this other-me, the difference is reduced to zero.

The double, cast away between life and death, between Eros and Thanatos, guarantee of immortality and simultaneously an omen of the end to come, accompanies alongside Sá-Carneiro's Work. It is equally present in Narcissus's story: the double is the other that he contemplates in the mirrorly water. Then it is not surprising that Narcissus took so long to realize that the other was in fact himself as, driven by the flow of the current, this other from himself enjoyed a certain freedom of movement, constituting an unfolding instead of a simple duplicate.

André Green (1983) mentions that the plane is one of the geometrical forms of narcissism. The plane evokes the mirror, a reflection surface and area of projection by excellence. And if the water was the reflexive surface that bound Narcissus, in Sá-Carneiro it is the Work that plays this mirror-like roll. His Work is the surface that enables self-contemplation and, as he sees his inverted image reflected (that from the other) he finds room for the edification of the self.

We are in this fashion faced with the *leitmotiv* of Sá-Carneiro's works: the internal break from a self that can't find his own unity and that aspires to it through the other. A unity perhaps once had but now long lost. And could that be, ultimately, the inherent aspiration of the human condition? Beings derived out of the combination of two halves (the expression 1x1=1 exemplifies our genesis), the incompleteness is in our nature, always walking alongside ourselves in our quest through life.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 147-156

Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis": A case study

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One cannot say, at least at first, why one does what one does, but it seems to me that what attracted me at the beginning in Kafka's story "The Metamorphosis" was its title, the idea of a transformation. Originally, then, my *intention* was to show how the structure of the metaphor which, as we know, is the structure of discourse, also corresponded to what happens when we imagine a story, exactly, by the way, as when we dream. Such was one aspect of my "response", and it is not at all impossible that what I called my original intention to deal with structure was only an excuse, a defence, in front of this tale of horror, something like a screen which would provide me with a reason to remain at a safe distance from what I was reading.

That there were other, more secret, reasons for my choice is possible, but this can only come to light as I proceed with my analysis – pun intended – of Kafka's tale of imagination. This is how psychoanalytical research into discourse always proceeds: from the desire of the analyst to a possible corroboration of his or her insights. Hypothesis and verification in fact, and this story of the transformation of a man into an insect[1] turned out to be so rich in symbolism – and even in what we can call "elementary symbolism" – that hypotheses were not too difficult to make. Thus did I feel I must delay my demonstration about structure and concentrate on contents instead. That this may have been a second line of defence is possible – the "clinical" study of signs being another way of detaching oneself from the original impression the text had had on me when first read – but it *also* constituted the necessary condition of a psychoanalytical study of the story.

At this point, clearly, a debate on what differentiates analysis from reading is in order. One of the tasks of the analyst – who knows, naturally, that reading, his first encounter with the text, precedes analysis – is to insist on this distinction, and this quite simply because the very function of discourse is to make us forget its hallucinatory nature. It follows that it cannot be said that the analytic enterprise is oblivious of the literary dimension of Kafka's writing precisely because reading and analysis do not have the same object; whereas literature cannot "function" without a "suspension of disbelief", the aim of psychoanalysis is to look into, or even beyond, the hallucinatory nature of discourse. The

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1 The fact that I am not writing "into a repulsive insect" obviously indicates that my response is made more of empathy than of disgust. *Ungeheueren Ungeziefer* (gigantic vermin) remains a very general term and we must notice that the words beetle – "dung-beetle" in fact – is only used towards the end by the charwoman, while I have not found "cockroach" in the text.

enterprise may seem to disregard the literary dimension of Kakfa's writing and appear to amount to a reduction of its status to that of a clinical case but, again, psychoanalytic criticism does not deprive the reader of the emotions that go with reading and in no way ignores the emotional potential of the text (which by the way depends on the reader's ability to be moved), because an emotion can only take place if, as a reader, I remain unaware of what precisely constitutes it. Whatever the complexity of the object considered and my involvement in it, I should be careful to distinguish, at least theoretically, what happens when I read, or dream, and what takes place, *afterwards*, when I analyse my response or my dream. Only at the price of such a distinction shall Freud's teachings make sense at all. The "objectivity" of psychoanalytic discourse is never more than relative, we know this, but it does nevertheless represent a progress in knowledge if always asymptotic.

Keeping in mind Freud's initial invention of the concept of "unconscious", therefore, his discovery of the simple Cs/Ucs structure (which leads to the structure of the metaphor), I shall however begin by looking at the symbolical dimension – dimensions – of Kafka's tale. Such a deferment of intention, from an interest in structure to a concentration on fantasy, is meaningful: it corresponds to an interrogation about what makes a "subject" and may eventually lead us to the actual discovery of what determines a human subject. Naturally, it would be simpler to say that psychoanalysis has no need of such a justification in order to lend an attentive ear to the discourse of Franz Kafka: he had read some Freud – and particularly *The Interpretation of Dreams* –, and his stories are so full of evident symbols, a sign of the time, no doubt, that we can consider them as an invitation to provide an interpretation.

The words, then, for I think there is a good chance the reader might follow me in my interpretation once his or her attention has been drawn to the passages that I find particularly significant for the psychoanalytic critic.

The first two pages, already, have a lot to offer and the first thing that strikes me is the difficulty Gregor has of getting out of bed. Here are a few sentences which "speak" to me:

> *Er lag auf seinem [...] Rücken and sah, wenn er den Kopf ein wenig hob, seinen gewölbten, braunen [...] Bauch, auf dessen Höhe sich die Bettdecke, zum gänzlichen Niedergleiten bereit, kaum noch erhalten konnte*.
>
> He was lying on his back [...] and when he lifted his head a little he could see a dome-like brown belly [...] on top of which the bed-quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely (3).

> [*Er] konnte sich aber in seinem gegenwärtigen Zustand nicht in deise Lage bringen [...] immer schaukelte er in die Rückenlage zurück*.
>
> [...] in his present condition he could not turn himself over [...] he always rolled on to his back again.

In passing, we can also notice in what manner Gregor finds his legs "pitifully thin".

In the next few pages, we learn of his difficulty to move, and also of a distinction between the top of his body and its lower part. He would like to get up, but can't:

> *[...] er machte sich nun daran, den Körper in seiner ganzen Länge vollständig gleichmässig aus dem Bett hinauszuschaukeln.*
>
> [...] he set himself to rocking his whole body at once in a regular rythm, with the idea of swinging it out of bed (8).

And his biggest worry, of course, is that he might crash on the floor, and also that the noise of his fall would cause anxiety or terror to his family. All the same, it would be nice if he could get up:

> *[...] fiel ihm ein, wie einfach alles wäre, wenn man ihm zu Hilfe käme. Zwei starke Leute – er dachte an seinen Vater and das Dienstmädchen – hätten vollständig genügt*;
>
> [...] it struck him how simple it would be if he could get help. Two strong people – he thought of his father and the servant girl – would be amply sufficient (8);

Should he succeed in his attempt, in any case, he still had to hope that "his legs would find their proper function". In the end, "with all this strength", Gregor manages to swing himself out of bed without too much damage: there is a thump but no crash.

You probably have by now an idea of what I have in mind. Another three short quotations will help me to conclude on this first point:

> *Gregor schob sich langsam mit del Sessel zur Tür hin [...]*
> Slowly Gregor pushed the chair towards the door[...] (13)

> *Oder er scheute nicht dit grosse Mühe, einen Sessel zum Fenster zu schieben [...]*
> Or he nerved himself to the great effort of pushing a chair to the window [...] (27)

> *[...] denn da er nicht verstanden wurde, dachte niemand daran, auch die Schwester nicht, dass er die anderen verstehen könnte,*
> [...] for since what he said was not understood by the others it never struck any of them, not even his sister, that he could understand what they said (23)[2].

If we now carefully examine Kafka's vocabulary in "The Metamorphosis" we shall be able to form a solid opinion as to the nature of one of the fantasies which concurred to the composition of the tale. A verb, often recurring, seems to me a good indication of what must have been (unconsciously) represented by the writer and tend to "verify" the hypothesis we may already have formed as to the symbolical meaning of the above quotations: *kriechen,* to crawl. Whenever Gregor moves through his room and through the apartment, he **crawls** (and a few times **creeps**).

> *[...] kriechen konnte er aber auf den paar Quadratmetern des Fussbodens auch nicht viel.*
> [...] he could not crawl very far around the few square yards of floor-space he had (29),

I interpret the frequent use of this verb as an indication that what is fanticized in the tale – among other things – is a regression to infancy. Gregor moves on the floor like a baby on all fours, and this may help to explain the numerous passages where the narrator reports Gregor's complaints about the weakness of his little legs, *hilflos*, "struggling legs" (3) which "he could not control in the least" (6). That there is more to legs (*Beine*) than this makes no doubt and we shall in due time discuss the word in relation to castration, but for the time being this is a strong sign in favor of the thesis which sees in the story a fanticized return to infancy. It is therefore not at all surprising that we should find many allusions to the sensations of a baby in the text. Like an infant, Gregor "overhears a lot in the neighbouring rooms" (24), and on several occasions he can be seen watching what is happening on the other side of his closed door: "He could see through the crack of the door [...]" (20).

Taste (22, 40, 42) and smell (19, 22) are also mentioned, and music, at one instance, convinces him that he is no animal. One thinks of Caliban, of course:

> *War er ein Tier, da ihn Musik so regriff?*
> Was he an animal, when music had such an effect upon him? (45)

The picture is quite complete indeed: filth and dirt (45) – realistic details in this portrait of a baby – are not forgotten, and there is a passage about teeth I find particularly significant:

> *Sonderbar schien es Gregor, dass man aus allen mannigfachen Gerräuschen des Essens immer wieder ihre kauenden Zähne heraushörte, als ob damit Gregor gezeigt werden sollte, dass man Zähne brauche, um zu essen, and dass man auch mit den schönsten zahnlosen Kiefern nichts ausrichten könne.*
>
> It seemed remarkable to Gregor that among the various noises coming from the table he could always distinguish the sound of their masticating teeth, as if this were a sign to Gregor that one needed teeth, in order to eat, and that *with toothless jaws* even the finest maxillae could do nothing (43-44) (my italics).

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[2] See also, for instance: "But although Gregor could get no news directly, he overheard a lot from the neighbouring rooms, and as soon as voices were audible he would run to the door [...]" (24).

Not a beast, Gregor is nevertheless helpless, like an infant (who has no teeth), and I cannot help reading also a discreet allusion to castration in this absence of teeth.

Which seems a good introduction to a commentary on what is very likely one of the words most frequently used in "The Metamorphosis".

Indeed, rare are the pages in which the word **door**, *Tü*r, does not appear[3].

In the fifty-one pages (3-54) of the Vintage Classic edition (2005) I am using, only ten do not have the word "door". Gregor crawls to the door of his room, runs or flees to it, and it is often closed or even violently shut on him

> *Die Tür wurde noch mit dem Stock zugeschlagen [...]*
>
> The door was slammed behind him with the Stick (19).
>
> *[...] blieb die Wohnzimmertür an manchen Abendessen geschlossen*,
>
> [...] the living-room door stayed shut many an evening (43).

An opening for entrance and exit, the door in our tale organizes the narrator's relationships with his parents and with his sister. It is in fact a perfect symbol of what structures Gregor's relationship to the world. It delimitates two different entities: the world of Gregor-the-infant (and Gregor the monstrous creature) and the world outside, the world of others.

Without stretching things too far, one could even see in the doors of Kafka's story a good representation of the Freudian "bar" between Cs and Ucs and therefore also the distance phenomenology sees in what separates the subject from the world out there. As such, it is the barrier through which communication must pass: gazing through a crack in the door, or overhearing what is being said on the other side, Gregor-the-infant thus gets acquainted with his family. And it is of course significant that the door of his room is so often kept shut. It is here that we best understand in what manner "The Metamorphosis" is an overall representation of the structure of the metaphor. Clearly, Gregor's fate depends on the way his family accepts to communicate with him.

At first, it is true, Gregor is the one who is responsible for the lack of communication between himself and his family:

> *Gregor aber dachte gar nicht daran aufzumachen, sondern lobte die vom Reisen Her übernommene Vorsicht, auch zu Hause alle Türen während der Nacht zu Versperren*.
>
> However, he was not thinking of opening the door, and felt thankful for the prudent habit he had acquired in travelling of looking all doors during the night, even at home (6).

But we soon realize that communication is not the only problem we are confronted with here. If Gregor, at this point of the narrative, hesitates so, or even refuses to open his bed-room door, it is because he can hide behind it: the door is a convenient screen, or veil, as we shall see. And as a consequence, I come to the conclusion that the fanticized regression with which I began my interpretation is only a small part of a larger and more complex fantasy.

For indeed it is not possible to forget that the desire to become a baby again – should this first part of my interpretation be correct – is accompanied by a metamorphosis into a repulsive creature, *an Untier*:

> *Er erkannte daraus, dass ihr sein Anblick noch immer unerträglich war [...]*
>
> This made him realize how repulsive the sight of him was to her [his mother] (28)
>
> [*die Mutter] erblickte den riesigen braunen Fleck auf den geblümten Tapete, rief, [...] mit schreiender, rauher Stimme: "Ach Gott, ach Gott!"[...]*
>
> She caught sight of a huge brown mass on the flowered wallpaper and [...] she screamed in a loud hoarse voice: "Oh God, oh God" [...] (33)

[3] The other word is probably "room".

And yet, when we come to think of it and make a list of the passages where Gregor's monstrosity is alluded to, we realize that they are rather scarce in the fifty-one pages of the tale. Indeed, once the narration is under way and has established the nature of Gregor's metamorphosis, we mostly come across short phrases reminding us briefly of the transformation he has suffered, and – this is worth noticing – referring to parts of his body only. In fact, "The Metamorphosis" is mainly about the difficult life of a "monster", the word being taken in all its possible acceptations, physical or mental. And at this point one cannot help wondering to what an extent the source of Kafka's literary invention did not lie in the fact that he thought he was "a monster" for his own parents. Only a thorough analysis of the writer's complete works could enable us to sustain such a thesis, but it certainly constitutes an interesting line of investigation. And thus, having read "The Metamorphosis", one may well ask the question: what does it mean to be a monster?

What is striking, however, and this is a tribute to the talent of the writer, what is striking is that "The Metamorphosis" not only provides us with a representation of what it is to be an infant (its sensations), but also of what it is to be "abnormal". And, more specifically, to be abnormal in the eyes of others. It seems that what was fanticized in Kafka's tale – "I am a monster" – concurred to the representation of a realistic situation:

> *In der ersten vierzhen Tagen konnten es die Eltern nicht über sich bringen, zu ihm Hereinzukommen* [...]
> For the first fortnight his parents could not bring themselves to the point of entering his room[...] (28)

This may be one of the reasons why the word "door" is the substantive most used in the text: as we saw, doors are often shut on Gregor, and his family wants him to stay away from them in his room, even to the end:

> *Kaum war er innerhalb seines Zimmers, wurde die Tür eiligst zugedrückt, festgeriegelt und versperrt. [...] Es war die Schwester, die sich so beeilt hatte. [...] "Endlich!" rief sie den Eltern zu, wärhend sie den Schlüssel im Schloss umdrehte*.
> Hardly was he well inside his room when the door was hastily pushed shut, bolted and locked [...] It was his sister who had shown such haste.[...] she cried "At last" to her parents as she turned the key on the lock (50).

A most appropriate way of speaking of the estrangement of the forlorn child, kept on the other side of the "door", the passage can also symbolize the obstacle the child wishes to surmount.

At this point, one cannot help thinking that the representation of a physical abnormality is so disturbing because it is in fact the sign of a trait that goes beyond the physical appearance of the narrator: this, we can call the symbolical dimension of the unconscious subject.

For a close scrutiny of Kafka's text reveals yet another type of fantasy, a deep-rooted fantasy which may help us to articulate more satisfactorily the fantasy of a return to infancy and the representation of the abnormality we have already noticed.

If we go back to the opening of the tale and carefully re-read its very first paragraph, an interesting detail calls our attention: "the bed-quilt could hardly keep in position and was about to slide off completely"[4]. Then, as we go on reading, we find, in the second paragraph, the picture of the lady which Gregor "had recently *cut* out of an illustrated magazine"(italics mine) and this detail makes us think that we may have found what explains the sliding bed-quilt. Here is the passage:

> *Es stellte eine Dame dar, die, mit einem Pelzhut und einer Pelzboa verstehen, aufrecht dasass und einen schweren Pelzmuff, in dem ihr ganzen Unterarm verschwunden war, dem Beschauer entgegenhob*.
> It showed a lady, with a fur cap on and a fur stole, sitting upright and holding out to the spectator a huge fur muff into which the whole of her forearm had vanished (3).

4 Later on, Gregor will cover himself with a sheet.

I find the insistence on vision interesting. Isn't it as if Kafka were "holding out to the spectator" something he wished him or her to notice, something that mattered to him as author in any case? And of course he could well have been the spectator of the scene he had himself imagined. The bed-quilt *about* to slide off has been replaced by the huge fur muff: in spite of the "sitting upright" – which can be read "erect" – *there is nothing to see*. We shall never know what is really inside the fur muff or behind the bed-quilt: the forearm or its *absence.* Obviously, this "*Vénus à la fourrure*" introduces an essential theme into the story. In a few moments, it is true, the bed-quilt will eventually fall to the ground, but this is another part, another act of this complex fantasmatic drama.

We remember that the baby wanted to get out of bed, wished he could be supported by its "little legs", and how realistic the representation was when he called for the help of two adults! Again, this forms part of the rich complexity of Kafka's tale. If we accept the fact that another fantasy – a second fantasy – was at work in the production of the story, there is no need to speak of a contradiction. The infant wants *to get up*, and the adult – or more likely the child who is no longer an infant – is responding to his discovery of a difference between the sexes and begins therefore to worry.

> *Er erinnerte sich, schon öfters im Bett irgendeinen vielleicht durch ungeschicktes Liegen erzeugten, leichten Schmerz empfunden zu haben, der sich dann beim Aufstehen als reine Einbildung herausstellete, und er war gespannt, wie sich seine Heutigen Vorstellungen allmählich auflösen würden: Dass die Veränderungrung der Stimme nichts anderes war als der Vorbote einer tüchtigen Verkühlung [...] daran zweifelte er nicht im geringsten..*
>
> He remembered that often enough in bed he had felt small aches and pains, probably caused by awkward postures, which had proved purely imaginary once he got up [...] That the change in his voice was nothing but the precursor of a severe chill [...] he had not the least possible doubts (6).

"Only a chill, no more", although once again the narrator gives himself away when he mentions "a change", not forgetting that the reference to voice also seems a discreet – if not conscious – reminder of the fact that male and female voices generally differ[5]. An obvious denial indeed, it should not prevent the analyst from understanding what is at stake here: confronted with the idea of castration, the unconscious subject looks for a solution, looks for a suitable "posture" to adopt: simultaneous to a desire to be a baby again, we find this discovery of a "monstrosity" which I take to summarize the fear of the child. Could it be possible, then, that our subject see a "solution" in the choice of femininity?

> *Die Decke abzuwerfen war ganz einfach; er brauchte sich nur ein wenig aufzublasen und sie fiel von selbst. Aber weiterhin wurde es schwierig [...]*
>
> To get rid of the quilt was quite easy; he had only to inflate himself a little and it fell off by itself. But the next move was difficult [...] (6).

It is as if our narrator were saying – and by saying I mean unconsciously implying, fanticizing – that the solution he was looking for was to transform himself into a woman and that that was not so difficult after all. We can perhaps even read "to inflate himself a little" as produced by a desire for pregnancy or at least for its possibility? And now we can understand why Gregor is jealous of those of his colleagues who "live like harem women" (4). The first few pages of "The Metamorphosis" reveal a fascination for femininity.

Gregor's recrimination about a job which so often causes him to get up so early, then – "The devil take it all!" (4) –, may well be interpreted as directed at a sexual status he would like to change: unable, as an insect or as an animal, to get up, Gregor worries about missing his train.

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[5] Voices are mentioned several times in these first pages: Gregor's mother's voice is gentle, "*Die sanfte Stimme*!" and he has a shock as he hears "his own voice answering hers". Already, it is the voice of the "baby" he has become, no doubt, *different* but still his own, but the *change* is not complete yet – the change to womanhood, I mean – for "the wooden door between them must have kept the change in his voice from being noticeable outside". The"quilt" – wooden door – is still here and will only fall to the ground in a little while.

Vorläufig allerdings muss ich aufstehen, denn mein Zug fährt um fünf.
For the moment, though, I'd better get up, since my train goes at five (4).

and:

Was aber sollte er jetzt tun? Den nächste Zug ging um sieben Uhr; um den einzuholen, hätte er sich unsinning beeilen müssen [...]
But what was he to do now? The next train went at seven; to catch that he would need to hurry like mad [...] (4-5)

"Like mad", yes, *unsinning*, for it may not appear as such an easy choise after all! For quite a while, at the beginning of the story, before the "falling of the quilt", Gregor worries about trains; the atmosphere is almost that of a dream: missing a train, catching a train... I think this can be interpreted as representing a choice not so easy to make but expressing an unconscious desire to change. One misses a train in order to be able to catch another. It is as if "Gregor" were thinking of a second choice, a way, perhaps, to start life all over again, and this may help to explain the sentence about the quilt which eventually falls "off by itself". (In keeping with such an interpretation, a sentence like "I'll cut myself completely loose then". (*Dann wird der grosse Schnitt gemacht)* (4) acquires a strong symbolical meaning, a complex meaning which will become clearer as our analysis develops: openly speaking of Gregor's relationship to his family, the sentence implies much more and bears a relation to Gregor's sexual status and to unconscious desire).

That such a choice is difficult to make is what can be witnessed in these first two or three pages. Although the transformation has already "taken place" with the very first sentence of the tale, it is possible that the consequences of such a radical change are considered by the writer-dreamer with apprehension. The mood is one of hesitation. Having missed his train – which in a dream could certainly be interpreted as expressing a desire to change or to give something up, and here, probably, to abandon one's present sexual status –, the alternative is not readily or easily accepted.

Was aber sollte er jetzt tun?
But what was he to do now? (4).

As if in a no man's land for a while, the narration hesitates: the alarm-clock has "not gone off", or *perhaps* it has, yes, "it must have gone off" (*Sollte der Wecker nicht geläutet haben? [...] gewiss hatte er auch geläutet*).

Nun, ruhig hatte er ja nicht geschlafen, aber wahrscheinlich desto fester.
Well, he had not slept quietly, yet apparently all the more soundly for that (4).

Could this procrastination reveal a desire for an ambiguous, hermaphroditic status? It is of course not impossible, but what is certain is that femininity in the end prevails.

For indeed, whatever the difficulty to go on (in "the next move") (6), the fantasy follows its course to the end, while the writer almost points out the place in the body where the change has occurred. The quilt has fallen to the ground – that was easy –, and Gregor will now try to get out of bed "with the lower part of his body first", a lower part "he had not yet seen and of which he could form no clear conception", but which must have mattered a great deal to the writer since the word (*unter*) appears three times in the paragraph. Should this, besides, not be sufficient, Kafka's paragraph closes with a piece of information which reveals the obvious nature of the fantasy: "[...] the stinging pain he felt informed him that precisely this lower part of his body was at the moment probably the most sensitive" (7).

Naturally, we cannot be satisfied with just this short analysis of the first four pages of Kafka's tale, but at least we have now a fairly sensible hypothesis. It remains to find out whether the other fifty pages of "The Metamorphosis" corroborate this first interpretation, or commentary: the discovery of a difference between the sexes and the possibility of (what the writer thinks is) castration sends the "young boy" on a quest for a "solution". That this would be solution reveals itself as destructive as what is feared is not the least of our analytic problems, as we shall see.

That castration is at the heart of "The Metamorphosis" is no exaggeration and this is no doubt the place to mention the aggression suffered by Gregor at the hands of his father later in the story. I spoke of a regression and of a desire to be an infant again, and as the story develops we can witness the child's entry into the Oedipal triangle. Gregor has to face the stern presence of a father whom we see "advancing with a grim visage" towards him. No wonder that he should be "dumbfounded at the enormous size of his [father's] shoe soles" (35). In the tale, the father is an essential *and complex* character (as is the sister); there is no doubt that this ambiguous figure, now weak and indifferent, now aggressive and violent, deserves an entire study in itself. Let it suffice for now to mention, page 36, the incredible scene in which Gregor is pursued by what I can only call a formidable father figure:

> *[...] er wusste ja noch vom ersten Tage seines neuen Lebens her, dass der Vater ihm gegenüber nur die grösste Strenge für angebracht ansah*.
> [...] he was aware as he had been from the very first day of his new life that his father believed only the severest measures suitable for dealing with him.

Why the father in the story "decides" to throw *apples* at his "transformed" son, or rather, what can we read in this choice of Kafka's is not easy and will have to be the subject of another psychoanalytic commentary. Was the jocular nature of this aggression with apples destined to conceal the violence of the scene? This reminds us of the ambiguity with which Gregor's father is treated throughout the tale. Unless there was in "apples" something reminiscent of an incident in real life? This may be for the biographer to say, who knows? Responses may naturally vary, but I cannot help noticing the violence of the scene.

> *[...] da flog knapp neben ihm, leicht geschleudert, irgend etwas nieder und rollte vor ihm her. Es ein Apfel: gleich flog ihm ein zweiter nach; Gregor blieb vor Schrecken stehen; ein Weiterlaufen war nutzlos, denn der Vater hatte sich entschlossen, ihn zu bombardieren [...] Ein schwach geworfener Apfel streifte Gregors Rücken, glitt aber unschädlich ab. Ein ihm sofort nachfliegender drang dagegen förmlich in Gregors Rücken ein [...]*
> [...] suddenly something lightly flung landed close behind him and rolled before him. It was an apple; a second apple followed immediately; Gregor came to a stop in alarm; there was no point in running on, for his father was determined to bombard him [...] An apple thrown without much force grazed Gregor's back and glanced off harmlessly. But another following immediately landed right on his back and sank in [...]

One can of course read the scene as a farce and accept the humorous tone of the narration, but it remains that Gregor is openly victimized in such a representation, that "incredible pain" (*unglaubliche Schmerz*) is mentioned and that the page which follows the scene begins with a reminder of the harm done to the son:

> *Die schwere Verwundung Gregors, an der er über sinen Monate litt [...]*
> The serious injury done to Gregor, which disabled him for more than a month [...] (37).

There is no doubt, a violent aggression was carried out. It is not possible to decide whether "lightly flung" and "without much force" were meant to temper that aggressivity or are simply there to reinforce the ambiguity I have just mentioned. Between the two explanations however there is no contradiction: the scene may carry both motives, and what remains primarily is this confrontation between father and son. The mother, in any case, will soon appear, thus completing the triangle, with the son, this time, in the role of the one who watches the (primal) scene.

And what we have now is a wounded hero, a hero "impaired, probably for ever". This, however, is not entirely new to us, for even before this fierce, and bizarre, Oedipal episode, the narrator mentioned bruises, "horrid blotches [which] stained the white floor" (19), and above all a "scar":

> *Seine linke Seite schien eine einzige lang, unangenehm spannende Narbe, und er musste auf seinen zwei Beinreihen regelrecht hinken. Ein Beinchen war übringens im Laufe der vormittägigen Vorfälle schwer verletzt worden [...] une schleppte leblos nach.*

> His left side felt like one single, *long*, unpleasantly *tense scar*, and he had actually *to limp* on his two rows of legs. *One little leg*, moreover, had been *severely damaged* in the course of that morning's events [...] and *trailed* uselessly behind him (19) (my italics).

Obvious references to some impairement, "To limp", "little leg" and "trailed uselessly" can easily be analyzed as signs of a "wound" inflicted by the Oedipal father, but the "long" and unpleasant "scar" may point to another direction or, *rather*, implies a second, complementary signification, the image, this time, being simply an effect of the discovery of a difference between the sexes, the striking disclosure of something to be dreaded.

In due time, we shall have to explain why Gregor was "chosen" to represent all that is hideous in Kafka's tale, and it will not be easy, but what is certain is that this is a representation of castration. The monstrous "baby", the horrible creature which frightens family and visitors alike is Kafka's representation of the sexual organ of woman. It is the "proof", for him – and I take this to be unconscious –, that the loss, or lack, of what he considers as essential is possible. Repulsive and disgusting this is what Gregor is:

> *Aber der Prokurist hatte sich schon bei den ersten Worten Gregors abgewendet, und nur über die zukkende Schulter hinweg sah er mit aufgeworfenen Lippen nach Gregor zurück.*
> But at Gregor's very first words the chief clerk had already backed away and only stared at him with parted lips over one twitching shoulder. (*aufgeworfenen Lippen* can be said to express disgust and seems stronger than just "parted lips") (16).

> *Er erkannte daraus, dass ihr sein Anblick noch immer unerträglich war und ihr auch weiterhin unerträglich bleiben müsse, und dass sie sich wohl sehr überwinden musste, vor dem Anblick auch nur der kleinen Partie seines Körpers nicht davonzulaufen*, *mit der er unter dem Kanapee hervorragte.*
> This made him realize how repulsive the sight of him still was to her, and that it was bound to go on being repulsive, and what an effort it must cost her not to run away even from the sight of the small portion of his body that stuck out from under the sofa (28).

The insistence on sight, on appearance, is clear, and it is not difficult to interpret what is meant by "the small portion of his body"; the sofa, also, is a good reminder of the sheet or veil we have already met. For Gregor's monstrosity – his "wound" – is such that others have to be spared the view of "it":

> *Um ihr auch diesen Anblick zu ersparen, trug er eines Tages auf seinem Rücken [...] das Leintuch auf das Kanapee und ordnete es in einer solchen Weise an, dass er nun gänzlich verdeckt war, und dass dit Schwester, selbst wenn sie sich bückte, ihn nicht sehen konnte.*
> In order to spare her that, therefore, one day he carried a sheet on his back to the Sofa [...] and arranged it there in such a way as to hide him completely, so that even if she were to bend down she could not see him (28).

Quite simply, "The Metamorphosis" is a representation of the horror of what is fanticized as "castration". A dramatisation of what Freud discussed in "The Uncanny", Kafka's tale, however, leaves us with a central and difficult question. For we still have to explain the role performed by the hero of what is, after all, a tragic tale.

I have suggested that Gregor's choice of a transformation was a flight to what he thought was femininity. Hoping to be "safe" on "the other side", hoping to be spared castration thanks to a change of sexual status, he nevertheless encounters a fate which is just as dreadful as the one he was running away from. His identification with what he takes to be a hideous wound leads him nowhere.

Could a close examination of the writer's discourse help us to understand the secret reasons which presided over such a neurotic choice? I think so, although the result of such an enquiry can only be an hypothesis. What is certain, however, is that "The Metamorphosis", on two occasions at least, very clearly describes an identification with a woman. We have already encountered the first occurrence, here is the second apparition of the "Lady mufled in so much fur":

Und so brach er denn hervor [...] wechselte viermal die Richtung des Laufes, er wusste nicht, was er zuerst retten sollte, da sah er an der im übrigen schon leeren Wand auffallend das Bild der in lauter Pelzwek gekleideten Dame hängen, kroch eilends hinauf und presste sich an das Glas, das ihn festhielt und seinem heissen Bauch wohltat. Dieses Bild wenigstens, das Gregor jetzt ganz verdeckte, würde niemand wegnehmen.

And so he rushed out [...] and four times changed his direction, since he really did not know what to rescue first [of his furniture], then on the wall opposite, which was already otherwise cleared, he was struck by the picture of the lady muffled in so much fur and quickly crawled up to it and pressed himself to the glass, which was a good surface to hold on to and comforted his hot belly. This picture at least, which was entirely hidden beneath him, was going to be removed by nobody (33).

Yes, Gregor "*presste sich an das Glas*", and as if this were not enough he then covers the lady's portrait with his own "hot" body, hiding her "entirely", thus taking the place of the image but at the same time also concealing... what is too horrible for us to see.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 157-163

Frida Kahlo, entre le masque et le miroir

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L'histoire de Frida Kahlo n'a pas besoin d'être raconté. Elle est trop connue, soit par ses écrits soit par ses tableaux. La plupart de ses œuvres sont des autoportraits, dans lesquels elle apparaît comme personnage principal, porteuse d'un regard profond et pénétrant. Son regard est celui d'une observatrice et il est fréquent d'essayer d'imaginer ce qui se passe derrière le masque qu'elle semble utiliser.

Frida semble se situer entre le masque qui cache et le miroir qui révèle. Dans une attitude ambivalente, toute sa création artistique paraît toucher ces deux points. Si, d'une part, elle révèle ses problématiques, en les représentant dans son corps comme si c'était une toile, son visage, d'une autre part, assume les caractéristiques d'un masque qui a comme fonction d'occulter ce qu'elle sent.

La métaphore du miroir a été utilisée par divers auteurs, parmi lesquels Freud (1912), qui compare la fonction de l'analyste à la fonction du miroir. Il devrait seulement refléter ce qui le patient lui montre, dans la recherche du moi. Cette expérience de miroitement (*mirroring*) est présente dans la relation mère-enfant et dans la création artistique (Knafo, 1991).

L'échange de regards, la réflexivité d'une image entière porteuse d'un sens, un reflet qui permet une expérience de miroitement satisfaisante, ce sont des présupposés fondamentaux dans le développement du bébé, soit dans le développement émotionnel individuel (Winnicott, 1967), dans la construction d'une des premières notions d'identité (Lichtenstein, 1977), ou dans l'acception d'une identité séparée (Shengold, 1974).

L'échange de regards entre la mère et l'enfant est une des modalités interactives essentielles, depuis les premiers jours de sa vie. Dans ce sens, l'allaitement est un moment privilégié pour ces échanges affectifs. Frida Kahlo a été privée de cette relation et elle a été livrée à une nourrice de lait.

Dans le tableau, "Ma Nourrice et Moi" (1937), Frida fait le portrait de soi-même avec sa nourrice qui porte un masque précolombien, en occultant les émotions engagées dans cette tâche. Les glandes mammaires mettent en évidence la fonctionnalité de l'allaitement, en même temps que la ressemblance entre les gouttes de lait et la pluie laiteuse fait le portrait de la liaison de l'artiste enracinée dans sa culture mexicaine. Même en adulte, Frida continue à être nourrie par ses ancêtres précolombiens (Herrera, 1989).

La privation de contact visuel suggère une relation froide et distante, et la façon dont elle se représente dans le tableau évoque plus une représentation d'un rituel de gestes qu'une relation humaine significative dans le plan émotionnel (Tibol, 1993). Quand l'expérience de se voir réfléchie est distordue, négative et peu empathique, ça produit dans l'enfant une sensation que son existence est niée. D'après Mahler (1972), si on ne proportionne pas un cadre de référence de miroitement, le narcissisme sera plus intense et le besoin d'acceptation et d'approbation par les autres va se prolonger pour toute la vie.

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Figure 1. “Ma Nourrice et Moi” (1937)

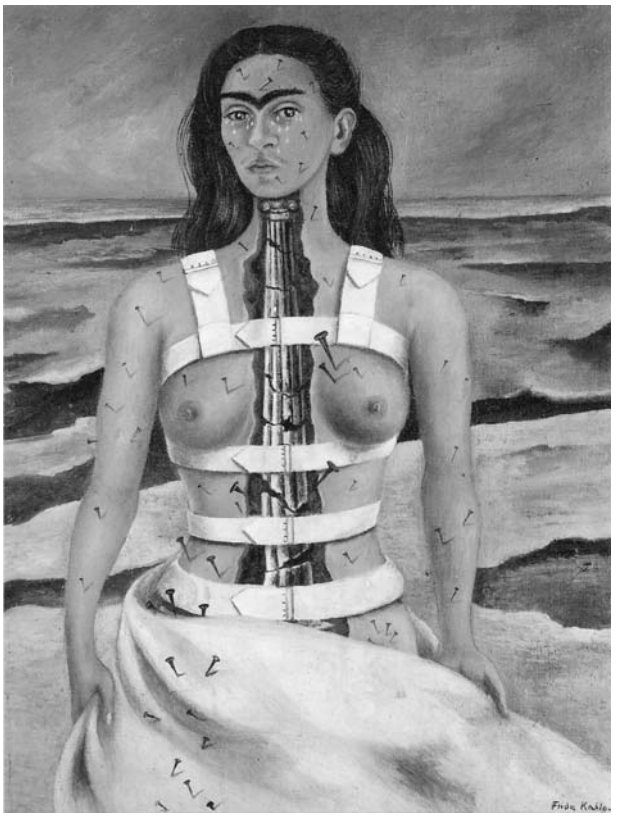

Figure 2. “La Colonne Brisée” (1944)

Lacan (1949) dit que quand il existe des faiblesses au niveau du stade du miroir, elles vont déclancher chez l’enfant une sensation de fragmentation corporelle: le corps morcelé. Ces conséquences ont duré toute la vie de Frida Kahlo et font portrait dans ses œuvres.

Frida Kahlo a non seulement lutté artistiquement avec le manque de reflet dans les yeux de sa mère, mais aussi ses autoportraits ont substitué sa mère et deviennent le miroir qu'elle n'a jamais eu (Knafo, 1993). À travers ses tableaux, Frida a fait l'effort d'obtenir ce qu'elle n'a jamais reçu en se voyant reflétée: une confirmation d'un moi firme qui l'aiderait à se déligner en tant que personne (Knafo, 1991), une validation de sa propre existence, réaction contre le sentiment d'auto désintégration et la peur de perdre son moi (Knafo, 1993).

En fait Frida avait une relation très particulière avec sa propre image, presque une obsession avec son propre reflet. Cette obsession peut être interprétée comme une tentative de restaurer un sentiment d'identité du moi qu'elle avait perdu. En prenant presque une attitude fétichiste, cette relation pouvait surgir comme une défense contre la psychose, qui rendrait possible d'établir un contact avec la réalité et maintenir un degré de fonctionnement *normal* (Malcolm, 1990).

"Ma Nourrisse et Moi", parmi ses œuvres, semble être un double autoportrait. Les sourcils contigus et le long cheveu noir suggèrent que la figure derrière le masque est Frida Kahlo elle-même (Herrera, 1989).

Figure 3. "Les Deux Fridas" (1939)

L'idée de *double* est évidente dans le tableau "Les deux Fridas" (1939). Frida Kahlo fait appel fréquemment à la dualité dans ses œuvres et dans sa vie. Ayant fait du miroir son meilleur ami pendant sa période de convalescence, celui-ci lui permet de peindre ses autoportraits, et en même temps son reflet lui tenait compagnie. Dans son journal intime (Kahlo, 1995), Frida explique l' "Origine de Les deux Fridas". Comme dans l'enfance, la petite Frida a cessé de pouvoir jouer et d'être libre, elle a inventé une amie imaginaire qui pouvait faire ces choses pour elle. "J'étais seule avec mon grand bonheur et le souvenir vivant de la fille. Se sont passés 34 ans puis que j'ai vécu cette amitié magicienne et à chaque fois que je me rappelle, plus elle s'avive et plus grandit à l'intérieur de mon monde."

Comme adulte, Frida devant tous les événements, a dû trouver encore un double qui faisait front à la souffrance atroce par laquelle elle passait. Les longues heures qu'elle a passé devant son miroir

ont accentué la notion de deux identités: la Frida qui observe et la Frida observée, le moi comme elle se sent de l'intérieur et le moi comme elle se montre de l'extérieur. La Frida-reflet et la Frida-masque.

Le fait pour Frida Kahlo avoir substitué la mère par son réflexe dans le miroir a permis de se représenter et créer un nouveau moi. Néanmoins, selon Winnicott (1960), les difficultés ou l'absence de la mère, le fait qu'elle ne réussit pas à être une mère suffisamment bonne, et de fournir un environnement satisfaisant répondant aux exigences de son bébé, peuvent faire que le bébé développe un faux moi. Ce faux moi résulte d'un effort continué pour assurer l'amour des parents et à partir de là pourra résulter dissimulation de son vrai moi.

Vu que la relation primaire de Frida Kahlo avec sa mère n'a pas été suffisamment bonne, on pouvait attendre qu'elle mourût physiquement, due au désinvestissement émotionnel dans les objets externes. Mais Frida a survécu, isolée mais vivante, faussement vivante. Frida le représente dans le tableau "Ma Naissance" (1932), où elle peint *comme elle imagine être née* (Herrera, 1989).

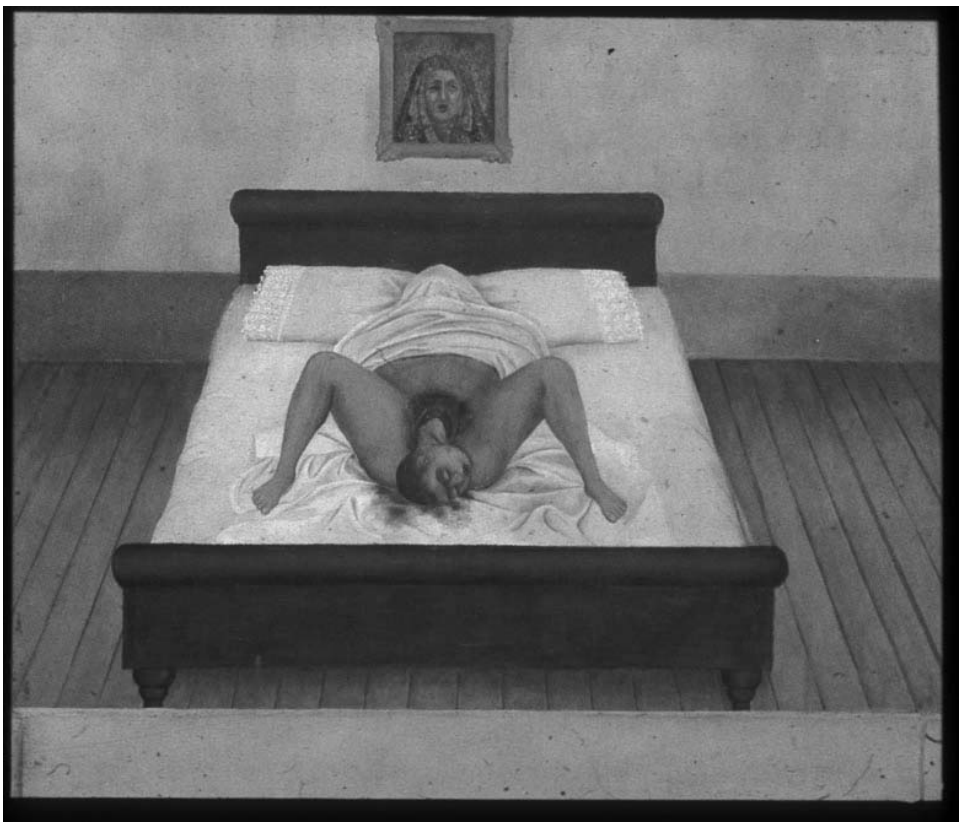

Figure 4. "Ma Naissance" (1932)

Nous voyons émerger, au moyen des jambes éloignées de sa mère, la tête d'un enfant que nous identifions comme Frida Kahlo dû aux sourcils joints, la principale caractéristique graphique de ses autoportraits. Couverte de sang, la tête tombée et le cou trop maigre suggèrent que ce bébé est né mort. Pareil à la mère couverte par le drap. *Ma tête est couverte parce que, par coïncidence, tandis que je peignais le tableau, ma mère est morte* (Herrera, 1989). Cette confusion résulte d'une identification à la mère, comme si elle incorporait la mère dans ses œuvres, pour pouvoir dépasser la privation de la relation primaire (Knafo, 1993).

André Green (1980) explique les répercussions des relations avec le fantôme de la *mère morte*, en se rapportant à la diminution de l'investissement émotionnel dans la naissance d'un enfant. Le bébé rejeté tend à exprimer son traumatisme par haine et faute concernant la mère, haine pour soi-même, narcissisme très fort et violent, intense créativité et ambiguïté relationnelle.

Cette intense créativité a amené Frida Kahlo à peindre plus de deux cents tableaux, la majorité autoportraits. Dans la plupart de ses œuvres, Frida s'assume comme personnage central, en occupant le premier plan et en regardant directement son observateur. En voyant ses peintures, nous pouvons constater que le visage de Frida semble toujours pareil, sans se modifier de tableaux en tableaux, comme s'elle utilisait un masque.

En vérité, Frida se définissait dans son journal intime comme *la antigua ocultadora*, ça veut dire l'ancienne qui cache pendant qu'elle écrit la recette d'un matériel de peinture avec laquelle Frida élaborait ses œuvres (Kahlo, 1995). Tous ses travaux mettaient beaucoup de temps à être exécutés et révélaient seulement ce que Frida prétendait. Curieusement ce sont les tableaux où Frida révèle le moins qui semblent être les plus expressifs au niveau d'émotions.

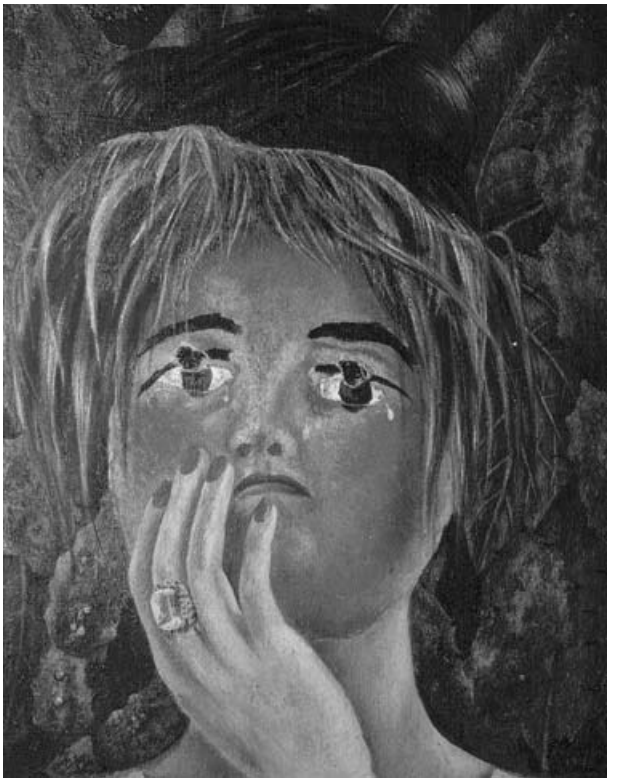

Figure 5. "Le Masque (de la Folie)" (1945)

Un exemple c'est "Le Masque (de la Folie)" (1945) où le début du masque est inversé. Cette fois, Frida dupe l'observateur. C'est elle qui regarde à travers des yeux d'un masque, c'est l'observateur qui est observé. Mais le masque pleure. Probablement, incapable de contenir la souffrance, Frida a le besoin d'utiliser un masque qui occulte la douleur que nous pressentons être trop insupportable. Chez le "Séminaire IV", Lacan (1956-1957) a dit que la présence du voile, ce qui est plus au-delà, comme une faute, ça tend à se réaliser comme un image. Devant du voile, on se peint l'absence.

La façon de s'habiller pourra être considérée comme un autre masque. Pour Frida, l'acte de s'habiller était un rituel. La combinaison de diverses pièces de vêtement et accessoires qu'elle choisissait est une manière pour se présenter au monde. Les amis, qui l'ont observée dans le rituel de s'habiller, la décrivent comme méticuleuse, comme si elle étaient en train de construire un personnage (Herrera, 1989). Après l'accident avec le tramway, Frida Kahlo a été gravement blessée. Les vêtements typiquement mexicains l'aidaient à occulter ses déformations physiques. Selon Lacan (1956-1957), les vêtements ne sont pas faits seulement pour cacher ce qui a, pour le but d'avoir ou non, mais aussi ce qui n'a pas.

Ces deux fonctions sont essentielles. Il ne se traite pas, toujours et essentiellement, de cacher l'objet mais aussi de cacher le manque d'objet. Dans ce sans, Frida prétendait créer une nouvelle identité. Quand elle s'habillait en femme de Tehuantepec, elle s'assumait comme jolie, stable, sensuelle, courageuse et forte. Zavitzianos (1972) désigne le comportement pervers de s'habiller des vêtements du même sexe de homeovestisme et rapporte qu'il est expliqué comme fétichisme, par introjection et identification à la mère ou identification narcissique. Ces vêtements, qui lui conféraient une féminité accentuée, permettaient à Frida de faire une tentative d'identification à la mère, puisque que l'identification primaire n'était pas possible. En outre, le vêtement lui offrait la possibilité de se représenter comme femme, elle qui se sentait précisément attaquée dans sa féminilité, par incapacité d'avoir des fils et par se sentir dépecée. "Pour elle s'habiller est plus qu'une expression artistique; entre se soigner devant un miroir et peindre un de ses autoportraits, il n'y avait pas beaucoup de différence. Dans les deux activités, elle se construit, quelque chose absolument nécessaire dans sa course contre la décadence. Parce que son corps lui tombait en morceaux, dans les terribles dernières années, elle écrit dans son journal intime *Je suis la désintégration* (Kahlo, 1995).

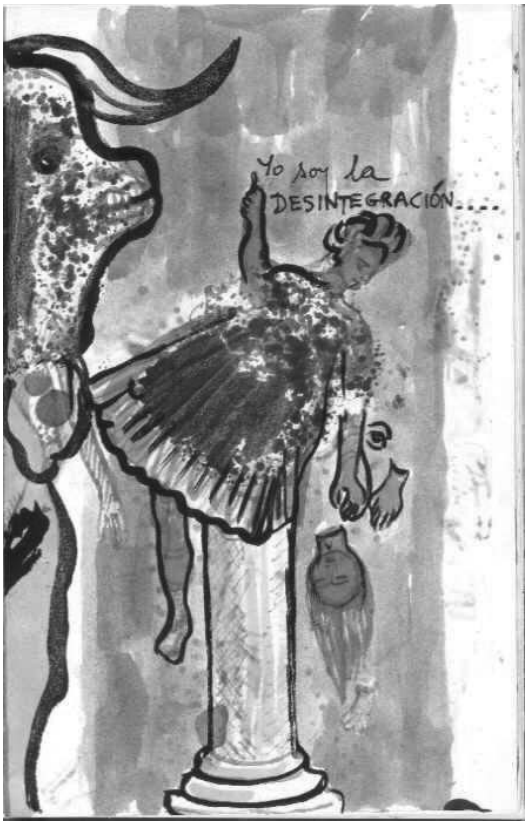

Figure 6. Page du Journal de Frida Kahlo

À travers la création artistique, Frida Kahlo s'est inventée et réinventée. L'art a lui permis de survivre, quand elle se sentait se désintégrer, et de se créer une nouvelle identité, quand elle était lacérée. La perpétuelle recherche de son reflet dans le miroir et la confirmation de son existence dans la peinture ont eu comme fonction principale de freiner la désintégration et de réparer, à la façon kleinienne, les objets internes et externes.

Pour Frida Kahlo, l'art trace un chemin pour la recomposition narcissique et pour la reconstruction du corps lui-même. Avec un corps morcelé et blessé, elle avait le besoin d'un miroir où elle pouvait se reconstruire.

Devant beaucoup de pertes et absences, les autoportraits marquent l'absence mais aussi la présence. Empêchée de vivre sa vie et obligée à s'absenter du monde, Frida a eu à se faire présente.

Mais ce processus de recréation d'elle-même a été possible seulement à travers de miroir et de masque, entre son reflet et le désir de se voir refléter, entre l'exposition et l'occultation de sentiments.

Frida Kahlo se trouve dans un carrefour entre le masque et le miroir.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 165-174

Tiepolo, père et fils

*EVELINE PINTO**

Dans le cadre d'un colloque psyart, on pourrait s'attendre à ce que j'applique la notion freudienne de l'Œdipe à l'analyse des rapports Tiepolo père et fils. Je ne procèderai pas ainsi pour deux raisons, l'une factuelle, l'autre théorique.

(1) Ces deux grands peintres du XVIIIème siècle vénitien ne nous ont laissé aucune correspondance privée qui permettrait de faire de la psychologie des profondeurs et d'interpréter la nature de leur relation en fonction du complexe d'Œdipe, de la théorie de l'inconscient ou de la théorie des pulsions.

(2) Disposerions-nous de documents personnels, que ceux-ci ne nous aideraient guère à formuler correctement le problème que soulèvent les rapports de ce père et de ce fils, unis, certes, par des liens de filiation naturels, mais aussi par cette espèce de filiation particulière qu'est la filiation artistique. Le problème qui se pose n'est pas de vérifier l'applicabilité d'une conception de la psyché et d'un système de pensée, jugé "a-historique", par certains commentateurs de Freud[1], au cas de deux artistes situables historiquement et localement dans la Venise du XVIIIème siècle, mais de comprendre comment une relation complexe, relevant à la fois de l'intime et du privé, du professionnel et du public, peut expliquer la carrière et les productions du peintre de seconde génération, Giandomenico, l'aîné et le plus doué des fils du décorateur génial que fut Gianbattista Tiepolo[2]. Il y a donc lieu de déplacer

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1 Carl E. Schorske, *Vienne fin de siècle*, Paris, Seuil, 1983 (1er édition, 1961).

2 Ibidem. Schorske historicise la pensée déshistorisée de Freud, en expliquant la découverte majeure de l'*Interprétation des rêves,* le complexe d'Œdipe, par l'auto-analyse qui permet à l'auteur d'apercevoir en lui-même, l'orientation de la libido ad matrem et le désir de meurtre du père. Cette découverte est reliée à la crise professionnelle, politique et personnelle consécutive à la mort de son père que traverse Freud au même moment. Jean Starobinski (*La relation critique*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970) qui situe de même à la jonction de l'auto-analyse, de l'expérience clinique et de la culture littéraire la découverte freudienne du paradigme de l'inconscient dans la tragédie de Sophocle, cite une note intégrée au texte dans les dernières éditions de la *Traumdeutung,* où l'auteur "découvre toute la différence qui sépare la vie psychique de deux époques longuement distantes l'une de l'autre" et constate la progression séculaire du refoulement dans la vie affective de l'humanité: "Dans *Oedipe,* le fantasme du désir fondamental de l'enfant est mis à jour et réalisé comme dans un rêve; dans *Hamlet,* il reste refoulé et nous faisons l'expérience de son existence – à la façon des manifestations d'une névrose, par ses effets d'inhibition". Cependant la science des textes pratiquée par le père de la psychanalyse n'est pas celle dont un historien de métier se réclame: dans cette histoire séculaire des pulsions, Freud oublie en effet qu'"qu'Œdipe était roi", et que le rapport père-fils concerne la chose publique·. D'après lui, Œdipe est à la recherche de son identité; d'après Sophocle, revisité par Carl Schorske et par le grand historien de la Grèce ancienne que fut Jean-Pierre Vernant (*Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne*, Paris, Maspero, 1972), Œdipe 'tyrannos', tyran ou roi, obéit à un impératif politique, qui est d'écarter la peste de Thèbes.

la question, du plan des sentiments personnels qu'un fils peut porter à son père ou inversement, à un autre plan où le père est le "maître" du fils, au double sens du terme: il est son pédagogue, lui enseigne son savoir et son savoir-faire, et le tient professionnellement sous sa dépendance, exerçant sur lui l'autorité "douce" d'un père sur son fils. L'artiste du XVIIIème siècle n'est pas ce haut fonctionnaire de l'art, dont la carrière est garantie par l'État, comme ce sera le cas en France au XIXème siècle jusqu'aux environs de 1870, avec l'émergence de l'Académie ou École des Beaux-Arts, qui par les titres qu'elle décerne, assure à l'artiste et à ses œuvres la possibilité d'accéder au marché. Pour bénéficier de la protection de quelques nobles clients, il doit rester soumis aux impératifs esthétiques de l'atelier familial auquel il appartient, sans déroger de la tradition picturale qui vaut, au maître qui le dirige, le capital de prestige acquis auprès de ses commanditaires ou mécènes.

Dans une enquête qui concerne l'art, l'histoire et l'histoire sociale de l'art, la notion freudienne d'inconscient, fondamentale dans un autre registre de recherche, ne paraît guère opératoire. Pour une analyse de ce type, le concept d'"inconscient historique", appelé aussi par Pierre Bourdieu "inconscient d'école", "inconscient" "scolastique" ou "académique", "transcendantal culturel", serait plus approprié. Par ces termes, le sociologue entend un ensemble de structures cognitives, communes à ceux qui sont les produits d'un même système d'enseignement, et qui pratiquent la même discipline dans une ère historique donnée. Ces structures sont "le produit du travail d'inculcation explicite qu'accomplit le système d'enseignement", mais aussi et surtout le produit d'une inculcation "sans intention ni sujet", qui s'opère par "l'immersion" dans un environnement donné. "Incorporé", "naturalisé", l'inconscient "scolaire" échappe ainsi aux prises de la conscience, et n'est saisissable que dans ses manifestations et ses effets, "par une enquête empirique, historique ou sociologique". Cet inconscient "scolaire" peut passer par des réseaux d'enseignement distincts de ceux de l'école proprement dite, comme ceux des Académies et des ateliers d'art: lieux de la transmission volontaire des techniques du métier, l'atelier et l'École des Beaux-Arts sont aussi les lieux où s'effectue le travail inconscient d'inculcation d'un ensemble de "dispositions" acquises mais naturalisées, communes à tous ceux qui sont le produit d'un même système éducatif. Ce qui est ainsi enseigné, c'est "ce qui va de soi", "va sans dire", dans tel ou tel microcosme, intellectuel ou artistique. Cette "doxa", "expérience ordinaire" ou "sens commun", est ce qui fonde la pratique des agents[3].

Ces pages cherchent à comprendre la situation de double dépendance de Giandomenico, assujetti, d'abord, comme son père, au statut social d'artiste bourgeois au service de la noblesse, puis aux règles de l'art que son père lui inculqua en lui enseignant les techniques du métier et la logique implicite, mi-artistique, mi-économique et sociale, à laquelle il se pliait. Elles cherchent également à expliquer la libération tardive de Giandomenico, finissant pat liquider l'héritage, intellectuel et artistique, transmis par son père. Il ne s'agit pas, toutefois, de le considérer comme le promoteur d'une révolution symbolique comparable à celle qui sera effectuée par Manet un siècle plus tard. Giandomenico réussit cependant à effectuer un retour critique sur les œuvres produites selon les principes implicites du goût communément admis dans sa jeunesse. Il s'agit donc de se faire une image des contraintes sociales qui pesèrent sur un jeune artiste du XVIIIème siècle, travaillant sous la domination affectueuse d'un maître qui était en même temps son père. Pour cela nous disposons d'un modèle théorique remarquable, offert par l'ouvrage de Norbert Elias, *Mozart, sociologie d'un génie*[4]. La constellation père et fils musiciens, construite par cet auteur, paraît en effet transposable au cas des Tiepolo, tous deux peintres.

Elias n'est pas un adepte du court-circuit marxiste qui expliquerait en termes réducteurs la musique magique d'un des compositeurs les plus doués de tous les temps. Il établit un lien entre la

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3 Pierre Bourdieu, "l'inconscient d'école", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 135, décembre 2000; "l'objectivation participante", *ibid*, 150, décembre 2003; "l'institutionnalisation de l'anomie", *Les cahiers du Musée national d'art moderne*, 19-20, Juin 1987.

4 Norbert Elias, *Mozart, sociologie d'un génie*, Paris, Seuil, 1991.

musique de Mozart, ses pulsions personnelles, et la relation d'interdépendance du père et du fils, dont les carrières ont pour cadre l'un de ces petits États déclinants, à faible niveau d'intégration, qui existaient encore en Europe à la fin du XVIIIème siècle. À Venise comme à Salzbourg, les artistes, placés sous la dépendance du prince et de la noblesse, avaient le statut de serviteurs de cour, équivalent à celui de valet de chambre ou de confiseur. Gianbattista se reconnaît dans ce statut: à Würzburg, au sommet de la gloire, il refuse de prendre ses repas à la table des officiers et dîne à celle des serviteurs. Ce statut est relié à ce qu'Élias appelle "la tradition artisanale de l'art", notion qui implique: (1) une inégalité sociale très nette entre l'artiste et le commanditaire[5], (2) une pratique où le père est le maître du fils, auquel il transmet son savoir-faire, ce qui les soude très étroitement.

Cette notion ne comporte aucun jugement de valeur: l'art de tradition artisanale n'est ni meilleur ni moins bon que l'art produit par "l'artiste indépendant" sur le marché libre de l'art pour une clientèle inconnue[6]. Elle a valeur différentielle, ce qui permet de la distinguer de celle qu'H.Rosenberg appelle la "tradition du moderne", où les artistes, tenus d'innover au nom de l'idéologie du nouveau, se révoltent non d'ailleurs contre leurs pères, mais contre l'autorité de la culture paternelle[7].

Dans la tradition artisanale, le goût dominant de la noblesse impose sa loi aux artistes qui doivent se soumettre à un canon inamovible. D'où, peu avant la Révolution, l'échec social de Mozart, musicien épris de liberté, incapable de plier son art à des normes extérieures aux siennes. D'où, trente ans plus tôt, le prestige et la réussite financière de Tiepolo père, qui s'adapte spontanément aux exigences de l'establishment. Pour le fils de ce grand artiste, le poids de l'héritage paternel fut sans doute très lourd à porter, mais son vécu individuel, déterminé par cette filiation, est inséparable de l'histoire de Venise et du champ artistique vénitien. À l'époque du triomphe de Gianbattista vers 1750, la cité vivait une "agonie indolore" dans le souvenir d'un passé glorieux, fuyant la réalité dans les visions irréelles offertes par ses peintres. Le rapport de Tiepolo père à Venise est une relation d'appartenance et de possession, et dans ce rapport *spontané*, il n'a pas besoin de délibérer pour ajuster son art aux exigences implicites de ses commanditaires. Il est possédé par leurs formes de pensée et de sensibilité, et partage leurs intérêts, la perpétuation de l'ordre existant. Pour le fils, le monde des choses et des institutions va changer, et avec lui, le monde des idées: l'héritage intellectuel et artistique laissé par Gianbattista est inapproprié à la nouvelle société, et le métier des fresques allégoriques, totalement obsolète. D'où l'inconscient artistique clivé de Domenico, possédé par un héritage pictural qu'il admire, mais qui, en même temps, le dépossède de lui-même, ou plutôt des expérimentations esthétiques qu'un peintre de seconde génération aurait souhaité faire. Après 1770, retiré dans sa villa de Zianigo, il va vivre en rentier et peindre selon son goût des fresques qui ne sont plus destinées qu'à lui-même. Comme Mallarmé, malgré l'acceptation de quelques commandes, il fait la grève devant le public, non parce qu'il lui reproche son penchant pour l'universel reportage, mais parce qu'il vit à une époque charnière où la tradition artisanale a disparu, sans faire place à celle du moderne. Sa peinture déploie alors "la liberté presque infinie d'un art qui fait face à sa propre fin", cela en apparence pour rien, ni pour personne.

GIANBATTISTA, SERVITEUR DE COUR

Lorsque Gianbattista, né en 1697, fait son entrée dans le monde de la peinture vers 1717, Venise vit une apocalypse joyeuse. Les caisses de l'État sont vides, mais les familles patriciennes qui partagent le pouvoir avec le doge sont fabuleusement riches. Le doge autorise les familles fortunées à payer leur droit d'entrée dans la noblesse et à occuper des charges dans l'État. Ces nouveaux nobles

5 À Würzburg, Tiepolo reçoit le salaire princier de 30.000 florins, mais l'investissement pour l'édification du palais s'élève à plus de 1.500.000 florins.

6 Norbert Élias, *op. cit.*

7 Carl E. Schorske, *op. cit.*

dissimulent leurs origines et s'incorporent à l'ordre des choses en achetant des palais et des collections artistiques. Il s'agit donc non pas d'un déclin du mécénat d'État, mais de son transfert "aux éléments constitutifs de l'État", aux familles patriciennes, dont Tiepolo père fut le serviteur zélé[8].

À ses débuts, il est conservateur des peintures de la maison du doge, et à la fin de sa carrière, sur injonction du Sénat, il est expédié, comme un pion dans un jeu diplomatique à Madrid, pour glorifier une vieille monarchie sur le déclin[9]. Dans l'intervalle, Tiepolo s'est imposé à ses mécènes, en ajustant son art à leurs désirs ostentatoires. Il flatte leur ego en vantant leur compétence, leur vertu ou leurs richesses, par des fresques représentant, pour un avocat, l'Éloquence, pour un lettré, le Combat des Vertus et des Vices, ou encore, pour Maria Labia, une veuve qui adorait faire étalage de ses bijoux, l'histoire d'Antoine et de Cléopâtre[10]. À l'occasion des alliances matrimoniales unissant deux familles patriciennes, il célèbre l'événement par des fresques allégoriques peintes sur les plafonds, où il rassemble toutes les divinités, païennes et chrétiennes[11]. À Udine, par allusion au conflit qui opposait au patriarche le souverain autrichien, il décore le palais épiscopal[12] avec *La chute des anges rebelles*. Il pratique bien l'humour, mais celui-ci n'a guère de portée contestataire. Cf. par exemple, *L'ange apparaissant à Sarah* pour lui annoncer qu'elle va devenir mère malgré son âge avancé: vêtue d'un costume de la Renaissance, Sarah, ahurie, écarquille les yeux et ouvre une bouche édentée. L'ange porte un costume étrange, qui aurait pu suffire à lui seul, comme il a été dit, à provoquer l'étonnement[13].

LA TRADITION ARTISANALE DE L'ART

Domenico naît en 1727. À son adolescence, son père, qui a le train de vie d'un riche bourgeois, le fait entrer dans l'atelier qu'il a créé.

À Venise, l'atelier est un lieu d'enseignement et de production collective. Tiepolo n'aurait pu peindre des fresques d'immense dimension, sans des auxiliaires chargés de préparer les couleurs, de peindre les parties secondaires, et même, de peindre à la place du maître, privilège souvent accordé à Domenico: ainsi les experts sont parfois incapables d'identifier ce qui revient au père et ce qui revient au fils. Celui-ci n'a pas vingt ans, quand il réalise sa première œuvre personnelle, le *Chemin de Croix* de l'Église San Polo. Un an plus tard, il suit son père sur le chantier le plus important de la carrière de Gianbattista, et collabore au décor du palais épiscopal de Würzburg. Y régnait un prince-évêque, considéré comme le champion des courants religieux et des institutions les plus rétrogrades de l'Europe. Dans la salle impériale (Kaisersaal) Tiepolo peint trois fresques faisant l'apologie de la société médiévale, par la représentation d'*Apollon conduisant Béatrice de Bourgogne auprès du génie de l'Empire,* des *Noces de Béatrice de Bourgogne avec Frédéric Barberousse,* et de l'*Investiture de Fréderic par le prince évêque Hérold.* Giandomenico reçut un salaire individuel pour des peintures allégoriques répondant à l'idéologie et aux goûts du commanditaire: *Justinien publiant le code, Constantin et Licinius, St. Ambroise interdisant à Théodose l'entrée de la cathédrale de Milan*.

Mais l'œuvre maîtresse du chantier réalisé par Gianbattista avec l'aide de ses fils et autres artistes formés à son atelier, c'est la peinture au-dessus de l'escalier d'honneur de la Résidence,

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8 Francis Haskell, *Mécènes et peintres:l'art et la société au temps du baroque italien,* Paris, Gallimard, 1991.

9 Symbole de son rôle officiel d'artiste au service de l'État, cf. la peinture *Neptune offre des dons à Venise*, au palais des Doges.

10 Dont les commanditaires respectifs sont la famille Sandi, les Casati/Dugnani de Milan, et Maria Labia.

11 F. Haskell, *op. cit.* p. 466, Au musée des beaux-arts de Lisbonne vous verrez le modello de l'allégorie des arts qui décorait le palais Archinto de Milan (aujourd'hui détruit). Le mécène est un érudit, aussi l'artiste lui destine une suite d'allégories personnifiées et de peintures parlantes.

12 Ibid*,* pp. 464-465.

13 Georges Brunel, *Tiepolo*, Paris, Fayard, 1991, p .74.

couvrant un plafond de 600m^2, entouré de quatre frises respectivement de 18 ou 32 mètres de long. Gianbattista y déploie une fantaisie, une verve, un brio, qui forcent l'admiration et l'enthousiasme. Ces fresques, typiques de "l'allégorie baroque", représentent les quatre continents rendant hommage au prince évêque Karl Philip von Greiffenklau. D'après Haskell, Tiepolo fait ses délices des rêves d'absolutisme et célèbre ici "l'ancien régime". Après avoir visité Würzburg, je pense avec Alpers et Baxandall[14], que les peintures du Treppenhaus, qui illustrent bel et bien un récit fait pour plaire au mécène, déploient sous les yeux ce qu'est l'art d'inventer dans le domaine des formes picturales. La structure et les dimensions de la voûte mettent le peintre dans la nécessité de rompre avec les caractéristiques de la peinture traditionnelle. C'est une peinture sans cadre, où il y a plusieurs points de vue possibles, sur un ensemble que le regard ne peut appréhender d'un coup. Le visiteur découvre successivement le plafond, un ciel gouverné par Apollon, puis l'Amérique, l'Afrique, l'Asie, enfin l'Europe, représentée par une allégorie des arts. Celle-ci est ornée par les portraits des divers protagonistes de l'ouvrage, dont notamment celui du mécène, le prince évêque, vers lequel les quatre continents sont orientés; de l'architecte de ce splendide plafond, Balthasar Neumann, qui paraît s'échapper et sortir de la fresque, par un merveilleux effet de trompe-l'oeil; enfin du peintre, de ses fils et de ses acolytes. Le portrait des deux Tiepolo, attribué à Giandomenico, montre (ill. 1) le père, devant, vêtu en artisan et le fils derrière, portant perruque poudrée, mais représenté comme son ombre portée dans une harmonie chromatique plus pâle.

Illustration 1

[14] S. Alpers et M. Baxandall, *Tiepolo et l'intelligence picturale, Paris,* Gallimard, 1996, p. 110.

Pour les contemporains, "Tiepolo et ses fils ne faisaient qu'un": ils composaient "une société", une entreprise prospère, où les fils, éduqués dans des dispositions favorables à la bonne marche et à la perpétuation de l'atelier, tiraient des dividendes conséquents du capital de prestige accumulé autour du nom du père[15]. Tant qu'il vécut, Giandomenico crut à la doxa dans laquelle il avait été éduqué et ne remit pas en cause le sujet et le style des peintures produites dans la "firme" familiale. Il savait que le style anti-canonique de la *Via Crucis* ne plaisait pas,que les mécènes préféraient l'esthétique onirique et sublime de son père. Dans *Le Menuet* ou *Bal du Carnaval* du Louvre (ill. 2), il essaie une forme de compromis entre leurs deux styles, mêlant au motif de la danseuse, conforme à un canon traditionnel de beauté, celui du Carnaval, traité selon le mode du grotesque. Le "secret" du *Bal de l'Opéra* de Manet selon Mallarmé, réside dans une "façon nouvelle" de couper le tableau. Le poète ignore que Manet adresse comme un clin d'œil au *Bal du Carneval* de Giandomenico, tableau alors à Paris dans la collection de la princesse Mathilde. L'artiste italien tronque avant lui les bords latéraux et le haut du tableau, de manière à donner au cadre, comme Mallarmé l'écrit à propos du procédé analogue utilisé par Manet, le charme d'une "limite purement fantaisiste", telle celle d'une scène que l'on regarde "dans l'encadrement de ses mains". Dans la Foresteria ou maison des invités de la villa

Illustration 2

15 Giandomenico possédait personnellement quatre maisons à Venise à la mort de son père.

Valmarana près de Vicence[16], le jeune peintre, laissé libre de décorer cette partie de la maison à sa guise, laisse deviner son talent novateur, d'abord par le choix du sujet, des paysans marchant ou au repos, puis par le style, par le souci du réalisme et l'exactitude avec lesquels il rend les postures et la démarche de ses personnages. Paradoxalement pourtant, il reste fidèle à l'enseignement de Gianbattista, en plongeant cette représentation du monde campagnard, dans l'atmosphère d'un rêve[17]. Ses paysans sont, comme le note M. Levey, des Mazetto et des Zerlina, qui évoluent dans un univers de "carton-pâte", aussi enchanteur et irréel que ceux de son père[18].

Avec la disparition de Tiepolo père en 1770, l'art rococo meurt avec lui. Son fils paraît alors se délivrer de ce monde enchanté, et le remplace par un mode d'expression plus personnel. Faut-il parler d'une levée du refoulement, d'une libération de ses propres fantasmes?[19] Sur les murs de la villa de Zianigo, on le voit parodier les thème s lyriques de son père, comme *Renaud abandonne Armide*, opposer à ces amours éthérés les accouplements sauvages de faunes et de centaures, et peindre un *Pulcinella amoureux* des plus charnels. On pourrait accorder au choix de ces thème s une dimension psychologique, les interpréter comme l'envers d'une frustration affective, d'une rancune à l'égard du père qui, en l'emmenant sur tous ses chantiers, ne lui donna guère l'occasion de nouer des relations amoureuses durables. Malheureusement, pour étayer cette interprétation, nous disposons de maigres données biographiques, et du témoignage ambigu des œuvres de la même époque.

Après avoir vécu en célibataire non loin de la maison paternelle, Giandomenico se marie à 50 ans, a deux filles qui meurent l'année de leur naissance. Sur ce mariage tardif avec une femme plus jeune que lui, les commentateurs ne s'attardent guère. Pourtant, un an après sa mort, sa veuve épouse un neveu de son mari plus jeune que lui d'une dizaine d'années.

Dans *Promenade* (ill. 3) et *Menuet dans la villa*, le peintre donne à ses trois personnages vus de dos, et à la dame au milieu, coiffée d'une énorme coiffe, l'allure d'automates[20]. Représentation amère de sa vie conjugale, avec, entre lui et sa femme, le neveu toujours présent? Vision sarcastique de la classe dominante?

Cependant ce sentiment de rancœur personnelle à l'égard du père qui le voua au manque et à la frustration, pourrait entrer en conflit avec le désir de sublimer la relation artistique du maître et de son apprenti, et de célébrer la complicité du père et du fils dans l'exercice de leur métier. Ainsi dans *Il mondo nuovo* (ill. 4) un montreur d'apparence offre à ses dupes représentées comme lui de dos, l'illusion d'un nouveau monde. Trois figures que la foule sépare, et qui attirent le regard par la façon significative dont elles sont présentées de profil, se reconnaissent de loin: à gauche, Pulcinella; à droite, Giandomenico, et devant lui son père, observant, bras croisés, cette figure qui leur est familière. Le fils marche derrière son père en ajustant son lorgnon, comme pour mieux voir le visage expressif et intelligent de Pulcinella, personnage récurrent dans ses œuvres, emprunté à l'arsenal des motifs chers à son père[21].

Cet autoportrait de l'artiste, en "fils marchant sur les pas de son père", met avec humour l'accent sur le geste symbolique qui le pose en émule du mentor auquel il doit tout, et notamment l'acte perceptif qui, à la vue du monde, voit le tableau à faire. Par cette fresque, Giandomenico redonne vie à une ombre et s'acquitte de sa dette: il est son guide dans le retour à la lumière. Six ans avant l'arrivée des troupes

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16 Son père a peint les murs de la maison principale, avec un lyrisme qui ne lui est pas familier. Quatre salles donnent sur le salon d'entrée, orné de fresque représentant le *Sacrifice d'Iphigénie.* Chacune d'elles a un décor inspiré des épopées d'Homère, de Virgile, du Tasse et de l'Arioste. Giandomenico aurait peint *Venus aux forges de Vulcain* et illustré des fragments de certains épisodes tirés *du Roland furieux de* l'Arioste.

17 Cité par F. Haskell, *op. cit.*

18 Michael Levey, *La peinture au XVIIIème siècle à Venise,* Brionne, Gérard Montfort, 1987.

19 Notons sur cette période de sa vie professionnelle, qu'élu en 1772 professeur à l'Académie dont son père avait été président peu après sa création en 1750, il démissionne pour d'obscures raisons en 1788.

20 A. Mariuz, *G. Tiepolo,* Marsilio, 2004.

21 Cette identification, sans doute un peu aventureuse des deux personnages marchant l'un derrière l'autre, est due à la présentation de cette célèbre fresque au Musée des arts décoratifs du XVIIIème siècle "Ca'Rezzonico", de Venise, où l'œuvres est conservée. Il reste que l'apparition de ces deux personnages de génération différente se livrant à un même acte de regard face à Pulcinella, suggère l'idée de filiation, et l'idée d'une activité, qui est de vision et de peinture.

bonapartistes et la fin de la République de Venise, une forme de vie à laquelle ils furent tous deux attachés aura bientôt vécu, et dans l'horizon chimérique évoqué par les charlatans, aucun monde nouveau n'apparaît.

Dans l'inconscient artistique de Giandomenico, on peut repérer une autre espèce d'opposition: d'un côté, l'incertitude de soi de l'élève qui se tient en retrait et ne cherche pas à surpasser son maître, l'effacement du fils devant l'image écrasante du père qui lui a tout enseigné, d'un autre côté, le regard ironique et critique porté sur l'œuvre paternelle. Domenico a-t-il cherché à concilier ces contradictions? Avec pudeur et discrétion, il choisit pour porte-parole la figure folklorique et populaire de Pulcinella, et pastichant son père, déploie sa verve contre l'univers artistique qu'il a créé: tout en démystifiant l'art de la fresque par le style ironique de ses dessins, il perpétue néanmoins la mémoire des thème s pastichés. Revenons sur la fresque de Zianigo, *Pulcinella amoureux,* version comique et érotique de la rencontre éthérée d'Antoine et Cléopâtre, qui fut l'un des grands thème s à succès, souvent exploité par Gianbattista: si le fils proteste contre le père qui entrava sa libido, il marque surtout ses distances vis-à-vis de l'artiste de première génération, dont l'autorité douce lui imposa ses choix, la soumission aux normes du goût de la noblesse, et la fuite dans des univers étrangers à toute réalité. Dans les dessins de la période de Zianigo, il se moque à nouveau de l'art paternel, demeuré sa hantise: ainsi le *mariage des parents de Pulcinella*, pastiche le *Mariage de Fréderic Barberousse*, et *Le banquet nuptial*, le *Banquet d'Antoine et Cléopâtre*.

Illustration 3

Illustration 4

La série de dessins regroupés sous le titre *Divertimenti per li regazzi*, d'où sont extraites les deux oeuvres mentionnées, découvre une nouvelle forme de contradiction: Giandomenico tout en célébrant le milieu familial, porte un regard critique sur l'enseignement qui lui fut inculqué, délibérément ou inconsciemment. La figuration spontanée et libre de l'enfance et de l'adolescence manifeste la présence tutélaire d'un père et d'une famille unie et heureuse, entourant l'enfant, suivant avec attendrissement les premiers ébats de l'adolescent; au contraire, la mise en rapport du frontispice avec le dernier dessin de la série, l'apparition sur la tombe du spectre de Pulcinella, suggère l'amertume avec laquelle l'artiste se tourne vers le passé, et son parti-pris d'auto-dérision: l'ironie de Giandomenico se fait ici grinçante, car elle est dirigée contre soi, contre la complaisance du fils à se plier "librement" sans qu'aucune violence ne fut exercée sur lui, aux ordres paternels. Ce fut le cas notamment, quand Gianbattista imposa à ses vingt ans les peintures de la série de la *Via Crucis*, comme si cela allait de soi dans l'atmosphère festive et peu encline à la piété de la Venise du XVIIIème siècle, qu'un tout jeune homme eût à traiter un thème aussi lugubre. D'où l'échec inaugural qui marque ses débuts dans la carrière, auquel il impute probablement son insuccès ultèrieur, le fait d'avoir été par la suite comme un artiste de rang secondaire: avec son inexpérience, le jeune peintre avait apporté spontanément une note de fantaisie et de gaîté au traitement de la *Via Crucis*, par le choix des costumes singuliers dont il avait revêtu ses personnages, et par le refus des tons sourds, le choix de couleurs, les jaunes et les rouges éclatants. Or ces options lui furent vivement reprochées par les critiques du temps.

L'artiste se tire de ses contradictions, par "l'adieu à un monde qui n'est plus", comme dit A. Mariuz, commentant *L'averse* (ill. 5). "Dans un pathos digne d'un film de Chaplin", le dessinateur montre des personnages, ici encore, vus de dos, s'éloignant sous la pluie, "vers un horizon indéfini"[22]...

Cet adieu n'est pas une fuite. Le style et la facture du dessin sont l'acte délibéré d'un artiste qui ose enfin se libérer du poids d'un héritage de formes désuètes, et rêver d'une poétique nouvelle. Cependant Giandomenico rêve et ne crée pas: il n'est pas Manet, il n'est pas l'artiste qui va révolutionner la peinture. Faut-il faire de la psychologie et lui prêter un tempérament timoré? Je ne crois pas, pas plus qu'il ne faut prêter à Manet un tempérament révolutionnaire, au sens littéral et politique du terme. Le temps est venu où Giandomenico et ses contemporains rejettent l'art aristocratique du XVIIIème siècle, mais un milieu artistique prêt à favoriser les actes de subversion

[22] Mariuz, op. cit.

esthétiques, comme le fera la Bohême parisienne au XIXème siècle, n'est pas sur le point de voir le jour, dans la société vénitienne en pleine débâcle. Giandomenico, accomplit sa "révolution" dans la solitude de sa maison de campagne, et ne gagne pourtant pas la réputation d'un artiste révolutionnaire. Et pour cause: en l'absence d'une structure institutionnelle venant prendre le relais de la tradition artisanale, et avant l'émergence d'un marché libre de l'art, la conversion collective du regard qui accompagne et rend possible les grands bouleversements picturaux, demeure en dehors des possibilités de l'histoire.

Illustration 5

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 175-179

Swiss cows and an English poet: Empathic nostalgia in a sonnet of Wordsworth's

BURTON MELNICK[*]

This paper was inspired by our Texan friend Sherry Zivley, who has often spoken to me about her state's special relation to its cattle. When she turns to that subject, I, as a recently naturalized Swiss, feel a kind of personal compulsion to deny that any people can be more attached to its bovines than we are to ours. I explain to Sherry that no one, except perhaps the national soccer team, knows the words to the Swiss national anthem – that in fact Switzerland had no national anthem until the 1960's – but that every Swiss knows a centuries old cowherders' song called the "Ranz des Vaches."[1]. The "Ranz des Vaches," which was used to call the cows in for milking, is quintessential nostalgia. It brings tears to the eyes of Swiss bankers, and in the eighteenth century there was a legend that it was forbidden to play or sing the "Ranz des Vaches" among Swiss soldiers serving abroad, because if they should hear it, they would be overcome with incurable homesickness – they would break down in tears, or they would desert, or else they would just waste away and die.

That story was publicized by Rousseau in his *Dictionnaire de musique* (1767/1995, p. 924), which was very widely read, with the result that during the Romantic era the legend about the "Ranz des Vaches" was known throughout Europe. Wordsworth refers to it in a footnote to *Descriptive Sketches* (1793/1984, note to line 63, p. 100), and it underlies the sonnet about the "Ranz des Vaches" that he published in his 1822 collection *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent*. Since that sonnet is not well known, I'll reprint it here:

ON HEARING THE "RANZ DES VACHES" ON THE TOP OF THE PASS OF ST. GOTHARD

I LISTEN – but no faculty of mine
Avails those modulations to detect,
Which, heard in foreign lands, the Swiss affect

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1 The "Ranz des Vaches" is actually a semi-generic term for a number of different cow calls. Best known today is the arrangement by Joseph Bovet. A selection of audio clips can be found at <http://www.swissinfo.org/eng/swissinfo.html?sid=7020216&cKey=1183635931000&ty=st&rubricId=25004&siteSect=25001>. A video clip of the "Ranz" performed at a major Swiss festival in 1977 is available on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DL1dXLLe5No&feature=related >.

With tenderest passion; leaving him to pine
(So fame reports) and die; his sweet-breathed kine
Remembering, and green Alpine pastures deck'd
With vernal flowers. Yet may we not reject
The tale as fabulous. – Here while I recline,
Mindful how others by this simple Strain
Are moved, for me – upon this Mountain named
Of God himself from dread pre-eminence
Aspiring thoughts by memory reclaimed
Yield to the Music's touching influence,
And joys of distant home my heart enchain. (1822/2004, p. 374)[2]

This paper will examine how Wordsworth's poem creates its effect – or, perhaps more accurately, fails to create its effect. But first, so that my argument will be clear, I need to say a few obvious things about the poem. One has to do with the poem's statement. Wordsworth is in the Swiss Alps, expecting to be moved by a melody that is reputed to have an extraordinarily powerful effect upon the Swiss. But he is not moved – not until, by *wishing* to be moved and especially, by being intensely conscious of how *others* are moved by the music, he puts himself into a state where the music finally has its effect. He produces that state in himself by actively calling up his own memories of his own home.

This is no insignificant detail. Ten years ago, at our meeting in Saint Petersburg, Edmond Wright, who himself comes from the North of England, read a remarkable paper called "Is *The Prelude* a National Epic?" While discussing patriotism, which he distinguished from nationalism, Wright asked whether "Wordsworth is only writing for the British." And he replied

> One can utter and uphold this inconsistent series: it is not nature that Wordsworth is writing about, it is Cumbria; it isn't Cumbria, it is North Britain; it isn't North Britain, it is all temperate maritime landscapes, it isn't just those landscapes, it is all landscapes, and all countries, the planet; it isn't the planet, it's nature. Each is a metonym for the other, hence you do not have to be British to appreciate Wordsworth. Yet in order to ignite your own national feelings, you have to enter into his Britishness. Yevtushenko wrote in a poem about the massacre at Babi Yar that to the degree he imagined himself a Jew, to that degree he was a Russian. (1999, pp. 148-149)

Wordsworth in his sonnet about the "Ranz des Vaches" is evoking something similar, a fundamental process which allows us to empathize with the Other and her experiences by activating our memories of our own salient experiences, in particular the formative experiences of our earliest years. This process not only allows us to put ourselves in the place of the Other – it also strengthens our own sense of self. It enables us to be comfortable with ourselves while interacting positively with others.

But, to make a second obvious point about this poem, Wordsworth sees a paradox in this psychic process. Hence his conclusion "*joys* of distant home my heart *enchain*." We do not normally think of joys as imprisoning us. In his conclusion Wordsworth may be trying, among other things, to evoke the bittersweet nature of homesickness (and in doing so he may be playing on the quasi-paradoxical connotations of "enchain," a word that can be associated at once with *constraint* and with *linking*).[3] But probably he is also suggesting that the empathic process I have been discussing has its limits – that empathy can never be perfect, that each of us is, in the end, a prisoner of her own experience, that we can only guess and never fully feel what the Other feels. That follows, after all, from the very definition of Otherness.

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2 The version of the poem printed and discussed in this paper is in fact the revised version of 1838, as given in the textual notes in the source cited.

3 I am grateful to Meg Harris Williams for pointing out the double connotation of "enchain".

A third obvious point about Wordsworth's sonnet is that its diction is, to say the least, uninspired. The poem contains two gross clichés – the "sweet-breathed kine" and the "green . . . pastures decked with vernal flowers," and much of its language seems unnecessarily prissy and stilted: "Yet may we not reject / The tale as fabulous," for example, or "no faculty of mine / Avails those modulations to detect." As a consequence, the poem does not (at least not initially) make much of an impact. Kenneth Koch once wrote that Wordsworth's "later work" is "boring / To the point of inanity, almost" (2006, p. 254), and for many readers this sonnet may be an illustration of that.

We can understand more about why this poem might appear insipid by looking at another, much better-known poem of Wordsworth's, "The Solitary Reaper" (1807/1983, pp. 184-185). In "The Solitary Reaper," Wordsworth is walking through the Scottish Highlands. Coming down into a valley, he sees a young woman off in a field, reaping and singing plaintively in Gaelic, which he does not understand. He stops and listens, trying to imagine what the subject of the song is. Then he departs, walking up out of the valley. But the song has affected him, rather mysteriously. The poem concludes, "The music in my heart I bore / Long after it was heard no more." The parallels between the two poems are clear. In both Wordsworth is in the mountains, away from home, and in both he is strangely moved by a piece of foreign music. But most readers feel that "The Solitary Reaper" as a poem succeeds, as the sonnet does not, in recreating the experience that Wordsworth is writing about – we readers are moved by "The Solitary Reaper" but (like Wordsworth himself in the poem) without quite understanding why.

In fact, the ability of "The Solitary Reaper" to evoke emotion has a great deal to do with its second stanza, with its two striking aural images of welcome relief after an extended period of harshness: the sound of the nightingale heard as travelers through the desert arrive at evening at an oasis, and the song of the cuckoo signaling spring in a far-flung island of the Hebrides. But imagery is precisely what is missing from the sonnet on the "Ranz des Vaches" – if the sonnet contains any sensory images at all, they are the two clichés that I've already mentioned: the sweet-breathed cattle and the pastures covered with spring flowers. More than anything else probably, it is the absence of any effective sensory imagery that makes Wordsworth's sonnet particularly uninviting.

Is it possible, however, that with this sonnet Wordsworth is writing a different kind of poem, one that requires a different kind of response from the reader? Is there a way of reading the sonnet so that we do respond to it emotionally rather than simply acknowledging, intellectually, what it describes? If so, we should probably make an attempt to read the poem that way. But what would be a more valorizing way of reading Wordsworth's sonnet?

First of all, we might take the clichés in the poem as resulting from a deliberate irony. In this reading, the first part of the sonnet deliberately and ironically sets out a conventional Romantic cliché. Then, in the middle of line 7, when the sonnet changes direction, Wordsworth denies that what he has described is merely "fabulous" – i.e, that it *is* merely a conventional Romantic cliché – and goes on to recount how he found some truth in it.

Secondly, we might choose to see the diction of the poem not as prissy but simply as precise, though cerebral. "Faculty," for example, is a carefully used technical term from psychology (just as "modulation" is a technical term from music). And when Wordsworth refers to the story about the fatal effect of the "Ranz des Vaches" as possibly "fabulous," he is implying exactly the same thing that I am when I refer to that tale as a "legend." Moreover, to cite a key example, "influence," which contrasts with the more scientific "faculty," bears strong quasi-mystical overtones from astrology. At one point in the history of the language "influence" could mean "The inflowing . . . (*into* a person . . .) of any kind of divine, spiritual, moral, immaterial, or secret power or principle" (Influence, 1971). Furthermore, despite the lack of sensory images, the precise diction of the poem does imply a kind of imagery. Between "aspiring" and "yield," for example, there is an implicit opposition (also developed by other words such as "recline," "moved," "enchain," and even "pre-eminence"), having to do with activity versus passivity, stasis versus motion, and perhaps with upwards versus downwards movement. This second degree imagery is not gratuitous, but is related to the role of the voluntary and of the involuntary in the psychic process that Wordsworth is writing about.

This poem, in other words, is no crude, simple-minded statement of what Wordsworth experienced. It rests, on the contrary, on a carefully delineated intellectual structure, worthy of respect.[4] Still, we can recognize that – we can even *give* the poem our respect – without, nevertheless, responding to the poem emotionally. What I would like to suggest is that if the poem does itself not *provoke* an emotional response in us, then perhaps the poem is inviting *us* to create that emotional response ourselves, not spontaneously as we usually do, but by a conscious act of the will, calling upon memories and experiences of our own. I am not affirming that this is so, just hypothesizing that it might be. But in the "Dedication" (i.e, the prefatory sonnet) to the volume in which this poem appears Wordsworth does say that the reader, through his own "vivid memory," must "supply / The Life, the truth, the beauty" that the poem only hints at (1822/2004, p. 358). If we were in fact to do this, then the sonnet would become an exact analog to "The Solitary Reaper" in that the reader's experience in reading the poem would recreate the experience narrated in the poem. The reader of "The Solitary Reaper" is mysteriously affected by the poem, just as Wordsworth is mysteriously affected by the reaper's song. In reading the sonnet on the "Ranz des Vaches" in the way I suggest the reader actively puts herself into a state where her own memories provoke a plangent nostalgia, just as Wordsworth has done in listening to the cowherds' song. If this is so, there would be no saying that the one poem succeeds better than the other in producing its effect. Simply, in order to produce its fullest effect each poem requires its own kind of reading.

Is it, then, possible, to read the sonnet on the "Ranz des Vaches" in the way I propose? It is. I know that it is, because I read the poem that way, and I find that doing so gives me a very gratifying experience. It may, of course, be easier for me to will empathy in reading this poem than it would be for most people, since I have had experiences of my own with the "Ranz des Vaches" and since the poem appeals to some of my own multiple identifications. But it would be a mistake to think that the only ones who can will empathy here are English-speaking people who have lived for a long time in Switzerland. In reality, the poem appeals, ultimately, to an identification that nearly anyone can make. Here is a very simple question, having to do with the "Ranz des Vaches": What is a cow? The answer should be obvious. A cow is a large, gentle, female animal that gives milk. Indeed, in the "Ranz des Vaches" the singer is calling the cow to come and give her milk. If the Swiss break down when they hear the song – if I feel a personal compulsion to explain to my friend how much we Swiss, even naturalized Swiss, love our cows – it is because a cow is a mother. The childhood experience that underlies the cowherd's call is the call of the hungry, lonely infant to his mother to come and give him milk. Who can not identify with that?

Most people, however, will probably not accept having to *make* themselves respond to a poem. They will require, rather, that a poem *provoke* their response, that it more or less magically charm them (as readers often say "The Solitary Reaper" does) into responding. There is no quarreling with such a requirement, even though it may deprive us of some potentially pleasurable (and perhaps even humanizing) experiences. It would be instructive, nevertheless, to reflect on that requirement. Doing so would reveal, I suspect, something important about why we read literature and what we expect from it. And it might also reveal something that applies more generally. I've been suggesting that the sonnet on the "Ranz des Vaches" is a kind of iconic representation of the act of empathizing with the Other through an act of the will. If in practice we refuse to will an empathic response to the poem and require instead that the poem charm us into that response, doesn't that reflect our reluctance in the social world to make a spontaneous gift of our empathy to those who have not actively provoked it?

For such reluctance, of course, both in our social relations and in literature, there are valid reasons. In the social world it is dangerous to offer our empathy too naively. And in responding to literature, facile empathy can lead to sentimentality, which obscures the emotional complexity of a situation. We are well aware that the white-haired lady on the Hallmark card and the "sweet-breathed" cow in the Alpine meadow are both emotional distortions, idealized representations of the *good* mother only (whereas the "Ranz des Vaches," it seems to me, unsentimentally expresses a longing

[4] This structure is made even more apparent by Wordsworth's revisions to his original text. This is the main reason why I have chosen to work with the 1838 version of the sonnet.

compounded of both positive and negative emotions). Still, empathy *always* involves risks of one kind or another. What our attitude towards literature seems to indicate is that we feel, rightly or wrongly, that those risks are lessened when instead of spontaneously offering up our empathy we wait, a little critically, for it to be provoked. And typically (though not uniquely) our empathy is provoked, as in "The Solitary Reaper," by an appeal to the senses, faintly reminiscent perhaps of our very first sensual pleasures and satisfactions.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 181-184

Human marionettes: From announced death to silent acceptance of a world that is dying

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The painter Paul Gauguin in his well-known work Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going? converses with the perpetual issue of the human existence which relates to life and death. In this work, the baby to the right, the aged figure to the left and the standing figure in the centre of the composition form the way from life to death. The central figure, in particular, raises her arms to cut fruit in such a way that creates the impression that she tries to draw elements of life, to taste life, to remain, that is, in this bright period which is between the dark mystery of birth and death. The figures in this composition, both the leading and the minor ones, seem to experience every minute of life, from beginning to end without worrying about its secret meaning while standing before us in a position of an initiation ceremony, if it were, which states perhaps the acceptance of reality. Gauguin in this way projects the harmonious relationship that has the primitive or any other man with his beginning and end which follows the round shape of deterioration and rebirth.

Let's see now the modern artist, the artist of the twentieth and twenty first century and let's see his view on the same subject: a film maker and a writer, Ingmar Bergman and Nancy Huston and the man-marionette in between.

In Bergman's film From the Life of the Marionettes (filmed in 1979) everything starts off with a murder: Peter Engerman, a young businessman will strangle Katarina, a prostitute, for unsolved reasons. Mogens Jensen, a psychoanalist, who has taken on the file of expert report, reveals that in the

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past, Peter had expressed the wish to kill his wife, a wish which at the same time created the fear of realization. The fear is expressed in a letter which Peter never sent to his shrink from whom he was asking for help. In this letter, a situation between dream and hallucination is described.

Initially, the research will lead to no essential conclusion justifying the act of murder. Everything in Peter's life was so well-arranged: his psychoanalyst, in particular, presents him as a lovable, talented young man, coming from a good family and having a successful marriage. But the film maker, with a flashback reveals that not only Peter but four other persons who act in the film, adopt social roles that do not respond to their pursuits and wishes. They act more like marionettes, directed by fear in case their assumed stability should reverse. Peter's mother Cordelia Egermann a renowned actress who revels in her delusion of self-martyrdom after sacrificing her career for her children. This might be the reason she was rather protective with her children, according to the shrink's view. Peter maintains a sick, liberated relationship with his wife Katarina, a woman with a successful career in the fashion field, since, although he talks about a mutual sexual liberation, he, himself recognizes this is a relationship with no feelings. This derives from their conversation which follows Peter's suicide attempt.

However, Katarina, herself, also hides behind a mask of success and emancipation, a mask which is fragile due to her inner insecurity, for wish to remain a child and fear of the death; all this shows her role of being protective towards Peter, a role relative to his mother but extremely weak, since it has to do with her authoritarian and possessive type as well as the fact, as she herself claims, that she never got into other shoes.

But Katarina's partner also, Tim, an insecure, aging homosexual who harbors an unrequited attraction towards the melancholic Peter, is the one who will introduce him Katarina, the prostitute, hoping that she will take him away from his wife and brings him to himself. The fear of deterioration and loneliness is obvious in Tim's words that like in a self-introspection, although he addresses Katarina, he expresses them before a mirror. And when he asks Katarina to recognize him, her negative reaction is rather tragic.

It's also remarkable that Peter's psychoanalyst deals with his client's problem in a rather superficial way, whereas in reality he is interested in having an intercourse with his wife Katarina which reveals how trapped he is in the system and how much he tries to respond to it. The only, perhaps, most real person in this story is Katarina, the prostitute, who appears to have accepted her role and doesn't hide behind a mask of social pretensions.

Concerning Peter, he is both a victim and a victimizer since he cannot get free from his fears and obsessions while at the same time he is obliged to respond properly to his, suggested by his social status, roles as a worker, husband, friend, and son. The resort he takes in alcohol and tranquillizers is for him an illusion of a temporary freedom and self-management which however enforces the guilt of his inability to active by handle his problem and hence the solution to his drama will be given with the violent strangling of the sole irresponsible for his condition person, Katarina, the prostitute, and the final loss of conscience for his actions.

Human marionettes in the hands of fate, weak people who cannot walk out of worn-out relationships as fear for tomorrow keeps them tied up. A theater of shadows in the light of modern cities where everything seems to move in absolute determination. Bergman, certainly, gives the absolute symbolism of the marionette in the scene of fashion models catwalk.

Dolce agonia, Nancy Huston's novel is an answer to Bergman's marionettes where man acts as an autonomous entity as if he defines his own destiny, whereas in reality all is controlled by God's omnipotence. In Huston's novel, God takes the role of a writer and surrenders to the envious delight of an account of twelve friends' destiny met at Shawn Farrel's house for thanksgiving dinner. In a snowy city of New Anglia, the guests talk about existence and love, they confess their expectations and disappointments and taking the occasion, they reveal the implicated intermarriages in their society. However, these people devote their last vigor to life. Sean Farrell, the poet 'with a gift for instilling discomfort', is the host for this unforgettable evening: among his dozen guests are poets and

writers and professors, former lovers, an artist-turned-housepainter, a bread maker, a secretary, and a young woman with an infant and a haunting past. Not all of them know one another when the evening begins, but, as this remarkable novel unfolds, the reader will come to know each of them intimately – to move inside their skins and to live in their thoughts, to share in their past sufferings and to know their hopes; even to catch a glimpse, through the eyes of their 'creator', into their futures, to know their fates. God's words, then, in the foreword of the book, which the writer very cleverly "situates in heaven, are remarkable:

> *"When I meet with the creators of other universes, I always make an effort to be modest. Rather than boasting about my work, I compliment them on the beauty and complexity of theirs. But privately, I can't help feeling mine's superior, for I am the only one to have come up with something as unpredictable as mankind.*
>
> *What a species! As I watched them living out their destinies upon the Earth, I often get carried away almost to the point of believing in them. Yes, they give me the uncanny impression of being endowed with autonomy, freedom of choice, a will of their own. I know it's merely an illusion, a preposterous notion. I'm the only one who's free! Every twist and turn of their fates has been decided on in advance; I alone know where they're headed and what paths they'll take to get there; I alone know their secret hopes and fears, their genetic make ups, the innermost workings of their hearts… And yet, and yet… they never cease to amaze me.*
>
> *Ah, my sweet humans. It's so tickles me to watch them flail and flounder. Blind, blind… perpetually hoping and groping, striving to believe in my goodness, make sense of their destinies, understand my plans. They simply can't help hankering after meaning. All I need do is give them a brush with birth or death and they think they've caught a whiff of it. Bowled over every time. Shaken to the core".*

God's presence continuously reminds us that the common destiny is death. Yet people devote to life their last vigour, whereas the reader reads the chronicle of their announced death beforehand: Patricia, Farrel's ex- lover, will die of cancer, Charles Jackson, a writer and Farrel's friend, will die in a car accident at an old age, Rachel, Farrel's ex-lover, at a very old age, Derreck, her husband, earlier than her, from a stray bullet, Hal, a novelist and Farrel's friend, had a stroke, just a fortnight after thanksgiving dinner, Chloe, his much younger wife, will commit suicide, whereas Hal junior, their son, from Alzheimer at his sixties, Aaron, the baker, will be burnt, Brian, Farrel's lawyer, had a stroke while his wife Beth, at an old age, Leonid and Katia in an aircrash and finally Farrel himself, two years after of cancer.

Like tragic irony in the ancient Greek tragedy, all is known to readers while the heroes of the novel ignore it and make plans for the future. In these plans, fear and insecurity and stress are present but pushed aside by the argent everyday chores. Huston's marionettes do not feel like marionettes defined by others. On the contrary, they seem to accept their illusionary world because they consider themselves to be the basic managers of their existence, as they put aside the fear of death all the time. The writer, particularly, by transferring her role to God's first person narration and using her clever, many times bitter, sense of humour, manages to lead the reader smoothly to serious existential issues. And in both cases, however, death and fear of death are the governor of the evolution of facts. Huston refuses to see her heroes trapped in their fears, take on the guilt of giving in their fears unconditionally and go over the limits of death by causing their own death. That is why she brings into play God's omnipotence which cancels human plans.

On the contrary, Bergman lets his own heroes be seized by intense feelings like despair and fear for certainty of death, which they try to hide behind masks of social roles. Peter, the basic conveyor of this situation, will try to discard the guilt of passive acceptance of reality by murdering Katarina,

the prostitute, who has his wife name, not accidentally, and who plays the most basic role in his closing in. Moreover, she is a woman too, a symbol of the wound that brought him to life, a life which he cannot stand. By killing her he manages to express what suffocates him, to present his real character and handle his existence, to be, in other words, real. That is why Bergman presents in color only the scenes of murder and Peter's confinement in the asylum.

While, respectively, in Huston's novel, God will start his narration with the words:

"Let's have some light, please".

Mebr licht!

Fiat lux!

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 185-189

Consequences of love deprivation in childhood: Ingmar Bergman's film *Autumn Sonata*

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In the modern society, an early deprivation of mother's love and its consequences are among the most socially significant topics. Potential for and ways of adaptation to demands of reality in individuals, who have gone through such a trauma, are a matter of concern for both scholars and artists. Bergman's film *Autumn Sonata* is devoted to this concern. With a great psychological depth, it represents a story about how those who were deprived from their mother's love eventually live, behave and build their relationships with the world.

There are three main characters in this film, all of them are women: Charlotte, a mother, and two of her daughters: Eva, the older and Helena, the younger. The plot is based on their family's tragedy. Charlotte, a talented pianist and an extremely self-centered person, deserted her little daughters in favor of her profession. This caused severe neurotic illnesses in her children: one developed depression and the other, paralysis.

Eva, the older daughter, left home, made a career, and married. Helena, the younger, is helpless, bed-ridden, and spent years in a mental state institution. Time passed, and the three of them met again at Eva's and her husband Victor's home.

At night, Charlotte sees a dream that Eva strangles her. She screams and wakes up. Eva hears her and comes. "Do you love me, don't you?", asks Charlotte, still under impression of her nightmare. "You are my mother" – Eva replies evasively. Then a conversation starts between them about their past life. Very soon it grows into a hard quarrel with squaring of accounts, unexpected mutual reproaches, accusations, recriminations, admissions of guilt, and tears. In the morning, Charlotte hastily leaves, although she intended to stay longer, and Eva feels guilty for driving her mother out and fears that she will never see her again. Thus ends what they expected to be a reconciliatory family meeting.

The question is what made Eva start a conversation which spoiled their relations that had seemed to get right only a few hours ago?

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The clinical picture of Eva's illness: In her childhood, Eva survived multiple traumas provoked by separation from the mother. In his scientific work, John Bowlby (1961) discovered that separation not only causes distress in the child at the time or even unhappiness later, but it is the cause of specific mental illness, notably depression. Separation institutes the mourning process which the child is too immature to go through without any harm, and the child results in being fixated on mourning forever. Due to trauma, Eva developed a depression at an early stage of her psychological development.

According to Erik Erikson's theory (1968), such children eventually experience serious difficulties when forming their identity. Eva is 30 years old now, but she is still experiencing the crisis of identity ("My biggest obstacle is that I do not know who I am. I grope blindly").

Another consequence of early separation from mother is that the child loses a capacity to trust her relationships. E. Erikson maintained that if distrust of the mother is developed at an early age, the child tends to carry the distrust into adulthood and attribute it to the world in general. Now, Eva does not believe that people can love her. She does not even believe that "she is loved whole-heartedly" by her husband.

When Eva's mother undertook to upbring her daughter, she was unrealistically demanding and intolerant: she never encouraged or complimented Eva. In result Eva thought of herself being "disgusting, stupid, and a failure". The terms of classical psychoanalysis fit well here: Eva had an unnaturally passive ID, a weak and underdeveloped EGO, and both were suppressed by an active, imperious, and harmful SUPER-EGO, reflecting the mother's authority, values, and attitudes. According to Sigmund Freud (1960), people having such a structure of personality inevitably develop psychological disorders. It is not a surprise, that Eva has been suffering depression and insomnia since her childhood.

But how is it possible that Eva, being a pathologically apathetic and practically broken, having many neurotic symptoms and suicidal thoughts, grew up to be a functional and productive woman? – She keeps household orderly and comfortable, she helps her husband to do his parish work, plays organ and piano, and even writes books. Additionally, she succeeded to recover after her only child's death, which is difficult even for sane people. Alfred Adler's idea of compensation (1997) can explain this transformation.

Eva grew up with a weak EGO. She left home, and it helped her to self-realize as a person. Due to her complicated life experiences, she developed her EGO: she learned to think logically, understand connections between causes and consequence of events, and to brilliantly express herself in writing. She compensated and even over-compensated the weakness of her EGO and turned it into a rare talent to see things as they are without coloring reality with her own senses or fantasies. This is what helped her to become a memoir writer, very philosophical one.

When her EGO became strong and mature, it comprehended the cruel lessons of her childhood and dethroned that inadequate and non-functional part of her SUPER-EGO which came from her mother's authority.

Due to Eva's overdeveloped EGO, she practices psychoanalytic conversations with herself – conversations that usually specialists conduct with patients. Meaning, she becomes the psychoanalyst herself. The main goal of a classical psychoanalytic session is to reconstruct a complete picture of the patient's past and relations with others. If this task is accomplished, and the picture is represented to the patient with all necessary explanations, the patient's illness goes away. That's why it is so important for Eva to know why Charlotte caused so much harm for the closest people to her.

The night quarrel between Eva and her mother, which is the central scene of the film, is a collision of Eva's EGO and her former SUPER-EGO. As a child, Eva suffered from her mother's despotism and indifference, and, being unable to resist, she directed her accumulated aggression to herself. She tells shocking details of her self-destroying behavior – biting nails and pulling out tufts of hair. Now, as an adult, she addresses the ultimate source of her tragedy. "Defend yourself", demands Eva. Charlotte responds with the story of her own childhood, and what she tells is not less shocking.

"I HAVE NEVER GROWN UP"

The clinical picture of Charlotte's illness: Charlotte went through an emotional deprivation in her childhood ("I cannot recall my parents ever having touched me either with caress or as a punishment. I was completely ignorant of everything about love: tenderness, contact, intimacy, warmth"). The trauma of her childhood started up a development of a detached type of neurotic personality with the "moving away from people" adjustment pattern. As Karen Horney pointed out (1945), such individuals lose their ability to love and tend to live distantly from others. Charlotte is over 60 yeas old, but she still has no idea of home or family. Her first husband oppressed her. Her second marriage is no better: Leonardo "lives at his villa near Naples" and she visits him from time by time in the course of her tours. She could never communicate with children; they irritated her. Also she was indifferent to her grandchild and now – to the memory of him.

The only person she is interested in is herself. She cares a lot about her appearance and success. She turns any conversation to her own person. She is extremely egocentric and self-loving. She is a narcissistic individual perceiving others as a mirror to reflect and admire herself (Freud, 1935).

On the other hand, Charlotte is creative and very active. "Her vitality can crush everyone", Eva says sarcastically. However, due to this very vitality she successfully found an activity to devote herself and the love of which she had been deprived as a child. Now she is loved and admired by thousands of worshippers. However, they are distant and this relationship bears no commitment. All the other relationships, including family ones, make no sense to her. She does not allow people to come close to her, so none can see that really she is "an emotionally crippled escapist".

Charlotte has an energetic and hypertrophied ID, which is the source of her creative potential. At the same time, her ID arouses constant conflicts with her SUPER-EGO. These conflicts bring a lot of problems for Charlotte's EGO ("Always a guilty consciousness"). She carefully suppresses and represses her anxiety, but it returns again and again in the form of a severe neurotic symptom – a pain in her back. Altogether, she experiences a cluster of disorders: pain disorder, insomnia, and addiction to tobacco smoking.

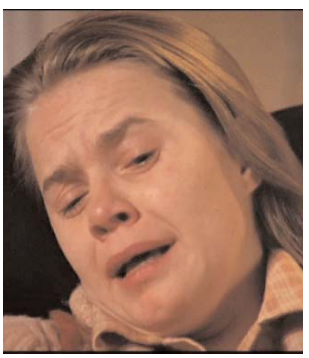
Victims of early emotional deprivation tend to degenerate mentally, socially, and physically. However, Charlotte, did become a famous pianist. Even at her age, when most people retire, she works hard and is very popular. Her concerts are scheduled many months in advance and bring her huge fees. How to explain this? – Sigmund Freud's principle of mental energy preservation and his theory of psychological defense, specifically the mechanism of sublimation, help us to understand this paradox (1960).

Mental energy, if it can not be used in the direct way, is not lost and may be transformed. Charlotte directed all her natural energy and curiosity to music. Due to circumstances of her upbringing, the world of human relationships, so important for others, has no value for her. She understands feelings better if they are expressed in music. When Eva speaks to her about the essence of life, Charlotte cuts her short and is unable to continue such a discussion. At the same time, Charlotte is sensitive to subtle psychological and aesthetical nuances of Eva's spirit when Eva plays Chopin's prelude. Music is more real for Charlotte than reality itself.

Charlotte's "escape from people" may be interpreted as a kind of *sublimation.* Although antisocial by its nature, it serves her musical career, which allows and even requires reduction of social contacts.

However, developmental distortions caused by lack of a loving mother are so severe that even the most successful sublimation can't defeat them. Actually, since her childhood Charlotte has been spending her psycho-physical resources to maintain sublimation. There was nothing left for motherhood. Due to this, Charlotte's life style that helped her to cope with her psychological problems and reach a high social status, harmed her family and mutilated her children's destinies, especially Helena's one.

"MAMA, COME!"



The clinical picture of Helena's illness: Helena was first separated from her mother at the age of one. At that age, a baby does not yet distinguish herself from her mother physically and perceives her mother's long absence as a partial loss of herself. It prevents her from developing a sense of her body's wholeness. Eventually, she, like her older sister, experienced multiple separation traumas.

Also, Helena's identity is undeveloped. In fact, she had always identified herself with her mother and could not perceive herself as an independent being. In adolescence, this inadequacy showed itself when she fell in love with Leonardo, her mother's second husband. It was a manifestation of her belated Oedipus complex.

This unrequited love became the last link in the chain of frustrations and traumas she went through. This time her subtle personality collapsed. S. Freud would say that Helena developed a somatoform disorder resulting from a conversion of underlying emotional conflicts into physical symptoms.

At the age of barely more than twenty, Helena is bed-ridden with atrophied muscles and impaired, unarticulated speech, and her condition continues to deteriorate. Eva, with whom she lives, takes care of her and serves as an interpreter connecting Helena to the world.

In Helena's personality, distorted by her illness, we can discern a suppressed ID, an undeveloped EGO and a SUPER-EGO in which her mother reigns. Helena is fixed on her childhood, still needs her mother and waits for her. She also suffers from nightmares provoked by repressed frustration and accompanied aggression – all this is due to the impossibility of being with her mother. When Charlotte unexpectedly leaves, not even saying "Good bye" to her, Helena falls into hysterics.

In Helena's case, because of very early emotional trauma, no compensation occurred. A trauma affects mostly those functions which develop intensively at that time. At one year, infants learn to walk and talk. That's why Helena's muscles responsible for locomotion and speech were so much impaired. At the age of one, consciousness and EGO start to develop intensively as well. Trauma prevented them from normal development. Therefore, Helena cannot consciously and voluntary

control her psychological functioning. This explains why her illness progresses uncontrollably and why it is incurable and irreversible.

"THE MOTHER'S INJURES ARE HANDED DOWN TO THE DAUGHTER"

And still there are neither rights nor wrongs in this story. Charlotte made her daughters suffer because she had suffered in the same way. Eva is Charlotte's victim, but at the same time she is guilty of her son's death. Children do not get drowned without a cause. (It is worth noting that in the initial version of the scenario Erik did not get drowned; he died from some unknown illness; but he did not stay alive anyway). Ingmar Bergman, as a scenario writer and film director, intuitively knew that Eva, in spite of being kind and attracting the audience's sympathies, was not a proper mother either.

This seems to be a law of social life: a woman who is unable to love will probably raise a daughter with the same defect, and the daughter will transmit it to the next generation. A mother carrying a trauma resulting from love deprivation inevitably dooms her posterity to illness and degeneracy.

There is one more circumstance without which our understanding of the characters' relationships will be incomplete. Eva and Helena belonged to an unhappy and dysfunctional family. When their mother was touring, an atmosphere of anxiety and depression reigned in their home. The father fell into apathy and, although he loved his daughters, he could not help them in dealing with emotional problems. Even during her absences, Charlotte seemed to be the center of their home and life.

Charlotte is an extraordinary individual: beautiful, elegant and sophisticated, talented and famous. She serves art. For sensitive, suggestible, and imaginative children such people are extremely attractive, because they look like magicians. If such a magician happens to be their mother, she is doubly attractive: they adore her, believe that she is perfect, and bow before her. There is similarity between the daughters' behavior and the behavior of many teenage girls who are madly in love with their rock star, a musical idol.

Is it worth while to love a star? – A star is beautiful and shines with a cold light. It is not dangerous at a distance; but one should not come near it because it burns. So, the daughters burned up in their mother's radiance.

From the history of psychology we know that S. Freud quarreled with his followers, when they deviated from classical psychoanalysis created by him and made new ways in science. However, my exposition shows that Bergman's *Autumn Sonata* supports different theories created by S. Freud, A. Adler, E. Erikson, K. Horney, and J. Bowlby even if Bergman did not care about theories at all. All these theories (and maybe others) can collaborate and complement each other in the study of this film. Ingmar Bergman reconciled them by the means of his art.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 191-205

Reinterpreting the 'Interpreted': Rilke and Modernism

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In a letter to Helene von Nostitz, dated July 12, 1915, Rainer Maria Rilke expresses his immense grief about the inhumanity of the raging war and his inability to concentrate on his literary compositions in a time of utmost uncertainty and hopelessness: "Schreiben heißt jetzt [during World War I], etwas über sich vermögen, denn was schreiben, wo doch alles, woran man rührt, unsäglich, unkenntlich ist, wo nichts einem gehört, kein Gefühl, keine Hoffnung"[1]. Indeed, the war that Rilke and his contemporaries initially perceived to be a welcome purification and renewal of humankind had turned into an incomprehensible and brutal killing, an untamable and vengeful monster. No doubt, Rilke (1875-1926) lived in an unstable epoch. World War I left Europe in ruins and, to a great degree, traumatized; the old Wilhelmine era in Germany had come to an end, replaced by a shaky attempt to establish a democratic Germany during the Weimar Republic. During all this social and political upheaval Rilke tried to find his own personal safe haven, a balance in his life, and he sought it and often found it in his art.

Art in general and literature in particular had undergone significant changes in both form and content at the dawning of the twentieth century. The complexity of life in a constantly transforming reality that emerged in the wake of sociopolitical disorder and confusion required a "profound shift in aesthetic and cultural sensibilities"[2]. Thus, a new art form would have to abandon traditional aesthetic concepts of rigid character constellations and simple moral contrasts of good and evil, as these models no longer proved to be an adequate modus operandi of portraying a profoundly chaotic reality. Since reality exhibited destructive and disintegrating elements that nullified customary notions of causality, its depiction as a rational system became obsolete. Influenced by the many social, political, and cultural changes of that period, the modernist movement arose and initiated the breaking down of set boundaries and the breaking away from established traditions of thought processes and

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1 Cf. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Rilkes Duineser Elegien*, Vol. I, Eds. Ulrich Fülleborn and Manfred Engel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1983): 127. Referred to as "letters."

2 Cf. Scott Heller, "New Life for Modernism," *Chronicle of Higher Education,* 5 November 1999: A21-22.

3 Similarly, Susanne Weingarten states in her article on "Das Jahrhundert der Massenkultur: Die Malerei der Moderne," *Der Spiegel,* 40 (1999): "Die Moderne sah ihre Aufgabe immer darin, Tabula rasa zu machen. Der radikale Bruch mit allem Alten war eine *Condition sine qua non* ihres ästhetischen und gesellschaftlichen Denkmusters. Vergangenes war Ballast, den es abzuwerfen galt" (277).

the prevailing *Zeitgeist* in order to pursue a deeper penetration of life by means of art[3]. Whereas nineteenth century realism pretended to give a true and faithful account of an objective reality, modernism, just as romanticism had a century earlier, turned to subjectivity and the portrayal of the individual's inner turmoil[4].

To understand the direction modern philosophical thinking took, one has to reach back to the writings of Kant, Schopenhauer, and Hegel. More than a hundred years earlier, Kant had already contemplated the profound skepticism that penetrated all layers of modern thoughts on being and meaning. According to Kant, we can never arrive at a *pure* knowledge of reality since we can never overcome our intellectual limitations and see into the essence of things. Besides, Kant questioned the existence of a "real" reality, the so called *noumenal world*, saying that the individual's self-consciousness imposes itself on the outside world, thus only permitting a perception of a subjective reality, the *phenomenal world*. Schopenhauer took the Kantian premise even further. In his main work, *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer, too, proclaims that the world exists primarily as an idea and as such is governed by individually differing perceptions. For Schopenhauer the innermost essence of being is likewise unattainable; however, if one realizes that the will, the core of all being and the origin of humankind's trials and tribulations, must be annihilated, one is able to arrive at inner peace and the "real" meaning of existence. Schopenhauer called this state of being the "nirvana," the surrender to the infinite that is death, and the artist's task, Schopenhauer declares, is to create this visionary ideal[5]. Taken at face value, the artist would be confronted with a twofold dilemma: if humankind is condemned to a meaningless existence in the real, and truth and meaning only be found in the unreal, i.e., the ideal, how can the unknowable be represented; or can meaning, albeit only in a subjective sense, be obtained in the here and now, in other words, would it be possible to find a Hegelian synthesis of being and meaning, or would it all otherwise result in what Hegel predicted to be the "end of art" as we know it? The significance of this artistic stumbling block at the beginning of the last century can not be overlooked, because, as one critic wrote, "nur eine ausführliche und abstrakte Auseinandersetzung mit Erkenntnistheorien und Erkenntnisskepsis zu Beginn unseres Jahrhunderts könnte plausibel machen, wieso Verstehen für Rilke und seine Zeitgenossen überhaupt zum inhaltlichen wie formalen Problem wurde"[6].

The most important impact on the nature of modern thought and the development of modern art and the new role of the artist, however, has to be attributed to one man: Friedrich Nietzsche. In the vein of Kant and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche posited that the superficial order of reality is undermined by a chaotic disorder. In his well-known essay *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche presented two fundamental life principles: the Apollonian and Dionysian, the exemplary versus the disruptive and unstructured, form versus formlessness. The Apollonian order, Nietzsche wrote, is constantly endangered by the Dionysian disorder, and to privilege the Apollonian rationality – as nineteenth

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4 The term modernism as the leading art form and aesthetic movement at the beginning of the twentieth century evades a clear and precise definition. At best, modernism can be defined as a somewhat eclectic term inasmuch as it combines various aesthetic elements by borrowing heavily from a series of other contemporaneous movements: it adopts and adapts its pessimistic portrait of the external world from naturalism; its employment of the abstract and irrational from symbolism; its often dreamlike, fantastic imagery and eradication of time and space linearity from neoromanticism; its stream-of-consciousness technique from impressionism; and its syntactic and semantic experimentation from expressionism. Even though we find an obvious plethora of ism-movements during this crucial time at the beginning of the twentieth century, underneath these diverse fashions in art lies a deep common concern about the disintegration of an already incomprehensible and meaningless reality, and the problem it poses for the artist and his work. Furthermore, contemporary currents in philosophy also notably influenced this clearly different worldview and intellectual climate.

5 Cf. Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation* (New York: Dover, 1966).

6 Cf. Manfred Engel, "Die 'Duineser Elegien' verstehen – Verstehen in den *Duineser Elegien*," *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft,* 10 (1983): 7. See also Judith Ryan, *Rilke, Modernism and Poetic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). Ryan writes: "The crisis went well beyond the personal. It was the crisis of an era. Rilke's ability to project his own psychological confusions and depressions onto the despair of an epoch played a major part in his literary success. The *Duino Elegies* are a case in point" (220).

century realism did – is a self-deceptive, illusionary outlook on life. Consequently, a break with traditional and obsolete concepts in life and art was necessary, since modern life requested a "reevaluation of values"[7]. Contrary to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche proclaimed the key concept for modern art and life not to be the abandonment of the real for an unknown utopia, as Schopenhauer favored it, but to seek a synthesis, to fuse the two realms of Apollonian and Dionysian, a fusion that would ultimately reinstate a newfound wholeness of man and universe. As Manfred Engel puts it, "die frühe Moderne löst zwar alle geschlossenen und tradierten Formen auf, hält aber an der Einheit des Werkes fest. Paradigmatisch hierfür ist die Tendenz der Lebensphilosophie, in der neuen Geschmeidigkeit des Denkens zwischen Besonderem und Allgemeinem, Individuum und Gesetz, Vielfalt und Einheit eine neue Balance herzustellen" (*Moderne Lyrik,* 85).

The desire for this totality and balanced unity of the self and reality, existence and essence, subject and object is one of the many characteristics of the modern narrative – and the main theme in Rainer Maria Rilke's *Duino Elegies*[8]. A few months before Rilke finally finished his *Duino Elegies*, he wrote,

> Denn so sehr der Künstler in einem auch das *Werk* meint, seine Verwirklichung, sein Dasein und Dableiben über uns hinaus –, ganz gerecht wird man erst, wenn man einsieht, daß auch diese dringendste Realisierung einer höheren Sichtbarkeit, von einem endlich äußersten Ausblick aus, nur als Mittel erscheint, ein wiederum Unsichtbares, ganz und gar Inneres und vielleicht Unscheinbares –, einen heileren Zustand in der Mitte des eigenen Wesens zu gewinnen (*Letters,* 215).

It had taken Rilke an entire decade from 1912 until 1922 to compose what he eventually considered to be his "most important work"[9]. Rilke's quest for this "wholesome state of existence," the "heileren Zustand," was by far not an effortless task; on the contrary, his distress and despair of ever completing the *Elegies* is well documented. If one reads his numerous letters to friends and patrons, it becomes evident that Rilke was both constantly torn between the desire to participate fully in life and the desire to be in complete seclusion and, moreover, was subject to mental anguish and anxiety neuroses that would often result in prolonged periods of writer's block. Prior to his embarking on the *Duino Elegies*, Rilke had just concluded his *Malte Laurids Brigge* and was in dire need to find a place of comfort where he would be able to recover from his mental and emotional exhaustion. When his patroness, Fürstin Marie von Thurn und Taxis, invited him to be her guest on

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7 Cf. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke in Drei Bänden*, Ed. Karl Schlechta (München: Hanser, 1965). Also see Manfred Engel's view of Nietzsche's influence on modernism in *Rainer Maria Rilkes 'Duineser Elegien' und die Moderne Deutsche Lyrik* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1986): "Bekanntlich ist Friedrich Nietzsche zugleich wichtigster Exponent wie auch einflußreichster Propagator dieser Krise aller traditionellen Werte und dieser Suche nach neuen Wertsetzungen. Seine radikale Erkenntnisskepsis markiert den Beginn genuin moderner Weltsicht und genuin modernen Wirklichkeitsverhaltens" (61).

8 Analyzing Rilke's poetic method and place within the modernist movement, Ryan states: "Rilke's form of modernism is a very particular kind that is both elegiac and restorative. He did not participate in the various experimental movements that constituted the avant-garde of the teens and twenties. The Futurists were remote from him because of their enthusiasm for modern machinery, which Rilke believed had alienated modern man from simple and more satisfying craftsmanship. He was familiar with Expressionist poetry, notably that of Georg Trakl, whose daring, visionary work he much admired; he also read poetry by Georg Heym, Else Lasker-Schüler, Alfred Wolfenstein, and Johannes R. Becher. He knew personally the Expressionist dramatist and political activist, Ernst Toller, through his connections with the political group around Walter Rathenau. He was delighted to discover the paintings of Franz Marc at the 1916 retrospective in Munich: he praised Marc's work as particularly unified, uncompromising, and pure. He admired Kokoschka, with whom he became friendly during his Munich years, when they worked side by side at the war archive. Still, he was reluctant to delve too deeply into the more painful aspects of Kokoschka's works, for fear of exacerbating his own depressive tendencies" (221).

9 In a letter to countess Sizzo from February 19, 1922, Rilke writes: "[Es] ist [...] mir endlich in diesen jüngsten Wochen gelungen, die Fäden meiner wichtigsten Arbeit, die alle von der Schärfe der letzten Jahre quer durchschnitten waren, wieder aufzunehmen und im einst angefangenen Geweb fortzuführen" (*Letters,* 252). And one month later he expresses to her that "diese Gedichte [...] das Wichtigste und Gültigste [enthalten], was ich um die Zeit meiner Lebensmitte festzustellen vermocht hatte" (*Letters,* 262).

her Italian estate Castle Duino near Triest, Rilke ecstatically obliged[10]. Although initially Rilke was certain that it would be here in Duino where he would regain his artistic spirit, it soon became evident that his work was not progressing and he found himself at a standstill: "Ich sehne mich nach Arbeit, manchmal meine ich einen Augenblick, auch sie sehnt sich nach mir –, aber wir kommen nicht zusammen" (*Letters,* 47)[11]. By February 1912, Rilke had finished the first and second elegy, and fragmentarily started on elegies three, six, nine, and ten[12]. Even though Rilke titled his work the *Duino Elegies* and hence dedicated them to his benefactress Marie von Turn und Taxis, he would change his domicile many times in the coming years before all ten elegies were done[13]. Rilke's own remarks about his apparent *Wanderlust* and his constant residing abroad are very telling as they lead to the very roots of the *Elegies'* stance – Rilke's preoccupation with language, his critique of language, and the artist's agony over its limited usefulness. In a letter from March 17, 1922, he writes:

> Dehmel [...] stellte mich geradezu zur Rede über mein ständiges Wohnen im Auslande. Ich konnte ihm unmöglich *alle* Gründe dafür anführen [..\.] so beschränkte ich mich, unter anderem zu sagen – mich dessen keineswegs rühmend, sondern es, wenn man so will, als eine Schwäche zugebend –, daß ich arbeitend, kein Deutsch (das meistens so widerwärtig schlecht und faul gesprochene!) um mich hören könne, sondern es vorzöge, dann von einer anderen, mir als Umgangsmittel vertrauten und sympathischen Sprache umgeben zu sein: durch solche Isolierung [...] nähme dann [...] das Deutsch *in mir* eine eigentümliche Sammlung und Klarheit an; abgerückt von allem täglichen Gebrauch empfände ich es als das mir angemessene herrliche [...] Material (*Letters,* 265).

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[10] Cf. Rilke's letter to Fürstin Marie von Thurn und Taxis from September 17, 1911: "Die Menschen (liegts an mir, liegts an ihnen) daß sie mich abnutzen, in Leipzig, hier, jedesmal war jemand da, der gewisse Dinge nichtmehr halten konnte und sie mir aufs Wesen niederstellte. Wie ichs dann von mir hinunterrücke, damit ists noch nicht gethan, dann wollen sie's auch noch erleben, wie und wo ichs ihnen hinbringe, und ich soll so richtig einen Denkstein darüber machen und eine Inschrift dazu. Ich bin's müde. Welcher Segen, daß Sie mich in Duino verbergen wollen: als ein Flüchtling, wie unter fremdem Namen, will ich mich dort aufhalten, nur *Sie* sollen wissen, daß ichs bin" (*Letters,* 37). Likewise to Elsa Bruckmann on December 14, 1911: "Ich wünschte mir seit lange, hier [in Duino] allein zu sein, streng allein, mich einzupuppen, zusammenzunehmen, kurz und gut, von meinem Herzen zu leben und von nichts anderem" (*Letters,* 42).

[11] Rilke also complained about the climate in Triest and found it to be detrimental to his well-being. See a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé, January 10, 1912: "Liebe Lou, wenns geht, so bleib ich wahrscheinlich bis in den Frühling hier, obwohl mir weder das Haus noch das Klima recht zusagt; dieser fortwährende Wechsel zwischen Bora und Scirocco tut meinen Nerven nicht gut, und ich erschöpfe mich darin, das eine und das andere mitzumachen" (*Letters,* 46).

[12] See the diagram about the genesis of the *Duino Elegies* in *Rilkes Duineser Elegien*, Eds. Ulrich Fülleborn and Manfred Engel, op. cit., 376-377. Whereas Rilke spent the following ten years laboring over his work, the first elegy apparently was conceived and completed in only one day, January 21, 1912. Fürstin Marie von Thurn und Taxis later recounted Rilke's own description of this 'miraculous event': "Rilke erzählte mir später, wie diese Elegie entstanden war. Er ahnte nichts von dem, was sich in ihm vorbereitete. Wohl machte er in einem Brief eine Anspielung: Die Nachtigall nähere sich [...] Hatte er da vielleicht das Kommende gefühlt? Aber sie schien von neuem zu schweigen. Eine große Traurigkeit überfiel ihn, er begann zu glauben, daß auch dieser Winter ohne Ergebnis bleiben würde. Da erhielt er eines Tages in der Frühe einen lästigen geschäftlichen Brief. Er wollte ihn rasch erledigen und mußte sich mit Ziffern und anderen trockenen Dingen abgeben. Draußen blies eine heftige Bora, aber die Sonne schien, das Meer leuchtete blau, wie mit Silber übersponnen. Rilke stieg zu den Bastionen hinunter, die, vom Meer aus nach Osten und Westen gelegen, durch einen schmalen Weg am Fuße des Schlosses verbunden waren. Die Felsen fallen dort steil, wohl an 200 Fuß tief, ins Meer herab. Rilke ging ganz in Gedanken versunken auf und ab, da die Antwort auf den Brief ihn sehr beschäftigte. Da, auf einmal, mitten in seinem Grübeln, blieb er stehen, plötzlich, denn es war ihm, als ob im Brausen des Sturmes eine Stimme ihm zugerufen hätte: 'Wer, wenn ich schriee, hörte mich denn aus der Engel Ordnungen?' [...] Lauschend blieb er stehen. 'Was ist das?' flüsterte er halblaut [...] 'was ist es, was kommt?' Er nahm sein Notizbuch, das er stets mit sich führte, und schrieb diese Worte nieder und gleich dazu noch einige Verse, die sich ohne sein Dazutun formten. Wer kam? [...] Er wußte es jetzt: der Gott [...] Sehr ruhig stieg er wieder in sein Zimmer hinauf, legte sein Notizbuch beiseite und erledigte den Geschäftsbrief. Am Abend aber war die ganze Elegie niedergeschrieben" (*Letters,* 49-50).

[13] Cf. Rilke's letter to Nora Purtscher-Wydenbruck from December 20, 1923: "Vergessen Sie nicht, daß die Elegien 1912 auf Duino begonnen wurden; das müßte sie Ihnen noch näher bringen. Die beiden ersten entstanden dort ganz, aber auch Fragmente der späteren waren vorausgekommen; andere Bruchstücke datieren: Toledo, Ronda, Paris; dann aber kam die tiefe verhängnisvolle Unterbrechung, und nun hat erst Muzot alles Vorhandene und jenes dazu noch zu Leistende in ein Ganzes und Heiles und Bleibendes gerettet: womit ein geistiges Jahrzehnt geschlossen erscheint" (*Letters,* 296).

Rilke's critical reflections on his native German and on the mode of language in general very much parallel those of his contemporaries. Indeed, as Manfred Engel points out, as modern life and culture was confronted with a break from outdated traditions and a "reevaluation of values," art had to explore a new approach of expressing these profound sociocultural changes: "Änderung von Weltsicht und Weltverhalten [...] bedeutet für den Künstler zunächst einmal: Änderung seiner Ausdrucksmittel – und die Radikalität dieses formalen Neuansatzes ist zu Beginn [des] Jahrhunderts in allen Kunstbereichen gleichermaßen unübersehbar" ("Verstehen", 14). Similarly, at the same time Ferdinand de Saussure with his concept of structuralism had proposed the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs, stating that essentially there is no intrinsic link between a "signifier" and the "signified," and that any relation between the two is completely conventional. Thus, per definitionem, language cannot accurately mirror the world around us. Hence, the problem for a writer lies in identifying the structures and workings of language, to rearrange customary linguistic uses, and in this manner put forth meaning through context. In the same vein as the Saussurean argument, Rilke declares:

> Schreiben zu können ist, weiß Gott, nicht minder 'schweres Handwerk', um so mehr, als das Material der anderen Künste von vornherein von dem täglichen Gebrauch abgerückt ist, während des Dichters Aufgabe sich steigert um die seltsame Verpflichtung, *sein* Wort von den Worten des bloßen Umgangs und der Verständigung gründlich, wesentlich zu unterscheiden. *Kein* Wort im Gedicht [...] ist *identisch* mit dem gleichlautenden Gebrauchs- und Konversations-Worte; die reinere Gesetzmäßigkeit, das große Verhältnis, die Konstellation, die es im Vers oder in künstlerischer Prosa einnimmt, verändert es bis in den Kern seiner Natur, macht es nutzlos, unbrauchbar für den bloßen Umgang, unberührbar und bleibend (*Letters,* 264-265).

Rilke had already previously addressed the issue of experiencing and "seeing" the world in a modern light and finding a new form of articulation in *Malte*. Malte, Rilke's first-person narrator, "lern[t] sehen. Ich weiß nicht, woran es liegt es geht alles tiefer in mich ein und bleibt nicht an der Stelle stehen, wo es sonst immer zu Ende war"[14]. Malte undergoes an existential crisis as a person and as an artist. He questions the authenticity of his reality, believing that his life lacks substance, that his consciousness has only allowed him to scratch the surface of "true" existence. Malte is in a state of transformation and it directs him to the discovery of his inner life, his subconsciousness as it were, "ein Inneres, von dem ich nichts wußte" (*Malte,* 10). For Malte, the writer, his altered perception of the world around him will have far reaching consequences when he realizes that

> Noch eine Weile kann ich das alles aufschreiben und sagen. Aber es wird ein Tag kommen, da meine Hand weit von mir sein wird, und wenn ich sie schreiben heißen werde, wird sie Worte schreiben, die ich nicht meine. Die Zeit der anderen Auslegung wird anbrechen, und es wird kein Wort auf dem anderen bleiben, und jeder Sinn wird wie Wolken sich auflösen und wie Wasser niedergehen (*Malte,* 47).

Rilke does not allow his protagonist to come to terms with his new transformed self, and just like the novel itself, Malte, too, remains a fragmented individual. But whereas in *Malte* the protagonist's struggle with the idea of transformation and transcendence is not resolved, the *Duino Elegies* paint a different picture. As Rilke explained in a letter about the differing messages he put forth in his *Elegies* and *Malte*, "in den 'Elegien' wird [...] das Leben wieder möglich, ja es erfährt hier diejenige endgültige *Bejahung*, zu der es der junge Malte, obwohl auf dem richtigen schweren Weg 'des longues études', noch nicht führen konnte" (*Letters,* 319).

Rilke's *Duino Elegies* have experienced an extraordinary exegesis and evoked a multitude of varied and often completely opposed interpretations[15]. According to Roland Ris "[ist] je nach dem Erfahrungshorizont des Interpreten beziehungsweise je nach den ihm vorschwebenden intertextuellen Bezügen d[er] 'Schlüssel' zu den Elegien bisher in ganz verschiedenen Bereichen gesucht worden:

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[14] Rainer Maria Rilke, *Die Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* (Frankfurt: Insel, 1982): 10.

[15] For a brief introduction into the history of literary criticism pertaining to the *Duino Elegies* see Torsten Pettersson's article "Internalization and Death: A Reinterpretation of Rilke's *Duineser Elegien*," *Modern Language Review,* 94 (1999): 731-743; especially 731-732.

Wer vom 'Malte' ausgeht, wird der Problematik von Liebe und Tod mehr Bedeutung zumesssen, als wer von den Ding-Gedichten herkommt und in der Evokation von einzelnen Gegenständen und einzelnen Tätigkeiten einen dann nur in den 'Weltinnenraum' hinein verlagerten Ding-Realismus sieht. Wer schließlich nach der Rückbindung des Menschen auf einen persönlich oder kosmisch gefaßten Gott hin fragt, wird in der Dichotomie zwischen Transzendenz und Immanenz seinen Ausgangspunkt nehmen"[16]. Undoubtedly, Rilke's unconventional use of linguistic forms, the use of rhetorical figures of speech, the extended utilization of schemes and tropes, plus the added ambiguity and symbolism which are filled with multiple (non-)meanings and connotations have generated the common conviction that the *Duino Elegies* are one of the most challenging and thereby misinterpreted poems in German literature[17]. The poet himself gives the most famous and most often quoted interpretation. When asked by his Polish translator Witold Hulewicz to provide some advice and instruction on how to read the *Duino Elegies*, Rilke, notwithstanding his hesitance, gave the following explanation:

> *Lebens-und Todesbejahung erweist sich als Eines in den 'Elegien'*. Das eine zuzugeben ohne das andere, sei, so wird hier erfahren und gefeiert, eine schließlich alles Unendliche ausschließende Einschränkung. Der Tod ist die uns abgekehrte, von uns unbeschienene *Seite des Lebens*: wir müssen versuchen, das größeste Bewußtsein unseres Daseins zu leisten, das in *beiden unabgegrenzten Bereichen* zu Hause ist, *aus beiden unerschöpflich genährt*... Die wahre Lebensgestalt reicht durch *beide* Gebiete, das Blut des größesten Kreislaufs treibt durch beide: es *gibt weder ein Diesseits noch ein Jenseits, sondern die große Einheit*, in der die uns übertreffenden Wesen, die 'Engel', zu Hause sind. [...] In jener größesten '*offenen*' Welt *sind* alle, man kann nicht sagen 'gleichzeitig', denn eben der Fortfall der Zeit bedingt, daß sie alle *sind* [...] Aber *nicht im christlichen Sinne* von dem ich mich immer leidenschaftlicher entferne, sondern, in einem rein irdischen, tief irdischen, selig irdischen Bewußtsein gilt es, das *hier* Geschaute und Berührte in den weiteren, den weitesten Umkreis einzuführen. Nicht in ein Jenseits, dessen Schatten die Erde verfinstert, sondern in ein Ganzes, in *das Ganze* [...] So gilt es, alles Hiesige nicht nur nicht schlecht zu machen und herabzusetzen, sondern gerade, um seiner Vorläufigkeit willen, die es mit uns teilt, sollen diese Erscheinungen und Dinge von uns in einem innigsten Verstande begriffen und verwandelt werden (*Letters,* 319-320).

As indicated by the poet himself, the *Duino Elegies* are assigned a dual task: to explore, at the onset, the intellectual and spiritual emptiness of man's existence, and at length to offer a new insight into a hidden and still unexplored side of reality in order to find new meaning and value in the world around us. Accordingly, Rilke's *Elegies* are divided into two parts: the first six elegies consist of the poet's lament over man's incompleteness, his insufficiency, and his questionable and doubtful half-existence, whereas the last four elegies, after having arrived at a "neue Sicht von Mensch wie Wirklichkeit" (Engel, "Verstehen" 10), display a transformation of his sorrow into joy and acceptance of the "here and now." To understand Rilke's thought processes it is necessary to point out some characteristics of his work. Rilke, as indicated earlier, takes his cue from Nietzsche's – via Hegel's law of the dialectic – dualistic model of thesis (the Apollonian) and antithesis (the Dionysian), and like Nietzsche is convinced that only a unifying synthesis that encompasses and reconciles both thesis and antithesis will grant access to a whole and wholesome state of an "absolute" existence. Rilke viewed the inhabitants of the modern world as determined by emotional insecurity, lack of spirituality, and a

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[16] Cf. Roland Ris, "Die Überwindung des kategorialen Denkens beim späten Rilke," *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft,* 20 (1993): 36.

[17] Also see Eleanor E. Ter Horst's analysis of Rilke's expanded use of the subjunctive in his metaphors and similes in her article "The Pendulum of Poetry: Metaphor and Mediation in Rilke's *Duineser Elegien*," *The German Quarterly,* 79 (2006): 308-328. According to Ter Horst, Rilke, by employing the subjunctive, hypothetical form, "creates a mode of existence outside the categories of truth and falsehood, presence and absence, being and non-being" (309). The concepts of linearity, continuity and constancy are thereby suspended, making it possible to transcend the realm of the Kantian "phenomenal world."

complete misconception of reality. According to Rilke, man's lack of wholeness is caused by his self-consciousness that limits and narrows his perception to merely a subjective view of reality, the Apollonian in Nietzsche's terms. Modern life for Rilke is characterized by set rules and laws, order and organization, all man-made structures, that by default prevent humankind from looking beyond the superficial structure into the Dionysian and preclude the apprehension of the essence of being[18]. Humankind is therefore excluded from participating in a unified existence within a universe "with which it can identify only spasmodically and which it can decipher only sporadically" (Sheppard, 584). Rilke shows his desperation over humankind's limited experience of reality by depicting the boundaries that man has set between the antipodes of the phenomenal and the noumenal, the empirical and non-empirical, the Apollonian and Dionysian. As a contrast to this gloomy view, in the elegies Rilke tries to establish a world where the contrast of inner and outer reality is eliminated, and a new significance is given to man's existence[19].

The *Duino Elegies* start with a bitter remark and the "lyrical I" lamenting: "Wer, wenn ich schriee, hörte mich denn aus der Engel/ Ordnungen"[20]? Since the representatives of the angelic order, i.e., the super-conscious sphere, are not listening to man's sorrow, the poet directs his lamentations towards humankind – the mothers, fathers, children, and the lovers[21]. As a matter of fact, if one examines each elegy individually, one notices a pattern of the speaker addressing every realm of existence from the self to society to nature. The first elegy can be perceived as the "lyrical I" being engaged in an inner dialogue with himself. Precisely since the angels are not paying attention to his anguish, he resolves to "keep down [...] and swallow the call-note" (21) and to converse with his inner self, his own "Herz" (22) instead. The speaker ponders the root of man's curse of being alienated from his "interpreted world," reasoning that it might be his constant distractions caused by his ever-present expectations. As a consequence he never expands his knowledge or transcends himself and the categories that he applies in reflecting on his transient experiences[22]. That is why angels "wüßten oft nicht, ob sie unter Lebenden gehn oder Toten" (24). The speaker then wonders if maybe "findige[ ] Tiere," "Liebende[ ]," and "Früheentrückte[ ]" (20-24) understand that, as Shakespeare once put it, "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of," and are able to catch a glimpse of the "real nature" of being.

Contrary to Manfred Engel's view that "in der Abfolge der 'Elegien' gibt es weder ein kontinuierliches Argument, noch strenge Konstruktion, noch überhaupt so etwas wie Progreß" (*Moderne Lyrik* 178), I would argue that the speaker's hypothesis made at the beginning of the elegies' cycle sets up the basis of discussion that is to follow in the succeeding five elegies. The second elegy is

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18 Cf. Richard W. Sheppard, "From the 'Neuen Gedichte' to the 'Duineser Elegien': Rilke's Chandos Crisis," *MLR,* 68 (1973): 578: "Briefly, Rilke's experience told him on the one hand that the all-encompassing, aristocratic world of pre-war Europe, in whose institutions and mythologies he had once implicitly believed, had been finally destroyed by the War, and on the other hand, that this old order had been replaced by the mass world of industrial capitalism which, in his view, had a vested interest in severing men from the creative trans- and irrational powers of their personalities in order to develop the rationally directed and functional will – a faculty for which Rilke had very little respect."

19 Cf. Hans Egon Holthusen, "Rilkes letzte Jahre," *Rilkes Duineser Elegien*, op.cit., Vol. II: 133.

20 Cited from: Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies* (New York: Norton, 1939): 20.

21 That Rilke did not apply any religious notions to the super-conscious realm becomes apparent in his previously mentioned famous letter to Witold von Hulewicz, dated November 13, 1925: "Wenn man den Fehler begeht, *katholische* Begriffe des Todes, des Jenseits und der Ewigkeit an die Elegien oder Sonette zu halten, so entfernt man sich völlig von ihrem Ausgang und bereitet sich ein immer gründlicheres Mißverstehen vor. Der 'Engel' der Elegien hat nichts mit dem Engel des christlichen Himmels zu tun [...] Der Engel der *Elegien* ist dasjenige Geschöpf, in dem die Verwandlung des Sichtbaren in Unsichtbares, die wir leisten, schon vollzogen erscheint [...] Der Engel der Elegien ist dasjenige Wesen, das dafür einsteht, im Unsichtbaren einen höheren Rang der Realität zu erkennen. – Daher 'schrecklich' für uns, weil wir, seine Liebenden und Verwandler, doch noch am Sichtbaren hängen" (*Letters,* 322).

22 Manfred Engel assumes that one can decipher a "dreifachen Entfremdungsproze[ß]" in the *Duino Elegies*: humankind's "Entfremdung vom Tod [...] Entfremdung der Menschen untereinander [...] Entfremdung des Menschen von den Ergebnissen seiner Tätigkeit" (*Moderne Lyrik,* 173).

directly addressed to "[euch] Liebende" (30). The speaker has thus already managed the first step towards expanding his perception of reality, as he has, by the very act of invoking the lovers, transcended his own self. Lovers are inherently different from the rest of humankind since their heightened passion allows them to sense "reine[s] Dauern" (32), whereas "wir, wo wir fühlen, verflüchtigen" (28), and wither away. However, although lovers, just like the speaker, seem to have momentarily escaped their self-conscious isolation, i.e., "they have managed to extend their consciousness as far as another single person"[23], their love is essentially nothing but self-interest. Just like the rest of us, lovers are not flawless either, as they are the ones who constantly restrict themselves and those they love through their love. Love, in Rilke's view, is, like all human actions, always combined with expectations and hopes; therefore the very act of loving is aimed at the future, and consequently overlooks and overshadows the present and the momentary, or as the lyrical voice puts it, "wir nur/ ziehen allem vorbei wie ein luftiger Austausch" (30). Man's self-consciousness does not permit him to indulge in the moment, as he constantly feels the urge to interpret his world according to a beginning and an end, either looking backwards or forwards, never experiencing the present to the fullest extent. Love's shortcoming is caused by its complete narcissism, which as a result narrows humans' perception of reality. Hence, lovers sacrifice perception, "sie verdecken sich nur mit einander ihr Los" (20), or as the more mundane version explains "Liebe macht blind." "Ist es nicht Zeit," the speaker then asks, "daß wir liebend/ uns vom Geliebten befrein und es bebend bestehn:/ wie der Pfeil die Sehne besteht, um gesammelt im Absprung/ *mehr* zu sein als er selbst" (22), for "treten Liebende/ nicht immerfort an Ränder, eins im andern,/ die sie versprachen Weite, Jagd und Heimat" (40)[24].

Still having found no satisfying proof for his earlier hypothesis, the speaker continues his search for an answer to the question why humans are incapable and even afraid of transcending their own subjectivity and individuality even when in love. In elegies three and four he analyzes – one might even say in an almost naturalistic mode – the topic of social upbringing and environment. Here the speaker addresses the mothers and fathers and their formative influence on children. We, as children, are born with an intuitive insight into the unknown, the strange and "wallende[ ] Chaos" (36). This a priori knowledge manifests itself in our early childhood dreams and nightmares. Reminiscent of Freud's dream interpretations, Rilke writes[25],

> Aber *innen*: wer wehrte,/ hinderte innen in ihm die Fluten der Herkunft?/ Ach, da *war* keine Vorsicht im Schlafenden; schlafend,/ aber träumend, aber in Fiebern: wie er sich einließ./ Er, der Neue, Scheuende, wie er verstrickt war,/ mit des innern Geschehns weiterschlagenden Ranken/ schon zu Mustern verschlungen, zu würgendem Wachstum, zu tierhaft/ jagenden Formen. Wie er sich hingab – . Liebte./ Liebte sein Inneres, seines Inneren Wildnis,/ diesen Urwald in ihm, auf dessen stummem Gestürztsein/ lichtgrün sein Herz stand. Liebte (36).

During the process of socialization, however, children lose their innocence and, hence, as adults no longer have direct access to the world within. The speaker blames the mothers for cutting the chord that tied the child to the "other": "Mutter, *du* machtest ihn klein, du warsts, die ihn anfing;/ dir war er

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23 Cf. Kathleen L. Komar, *Transcending Angels. Rainer Maria Rilke's Duino Elegies* (Lincoln: U of Nebraska Press, 1987): 10.

24 Rilke expressed a similar view on love and the contrast between requited and unrequited lovers in his *Malte*. There the first-person narrator says, "Geliebtsein heißt aufbrennen. Lieben ist: Leuchten mit unerschöpflichem Öle. Geliebtwerden ist vergehen, Lieben ist dauern" (194).

25 It is worth mentioning that Rilke was familiar with Sigmund Freud and his work primarily through his friendship with Lou Andreas-Salomé. In their edition of Rilke's letters, the editors comment: "Lou Andreas-Salomé (1861-1937) war zweifellos eine der interessantesten Frauengestalten der Epoche: 1882 hatte sie Nietzsche kennengelernt, mit dem sie einige Zeit befreundet blieb, 1912/13 studierte sie bei Freud die eben entwickelte Wissenschaft der Psychoanalyse und war später selbst als Analytikerin tätig. Rilke war ihr im Mai 1897 erstmals begegnet; 1899 und 1900 reisten sie gemeinsam nach Rußland, beide Male kam es zu einem Besuch bei Leo Tolstoi. Mit den Jahren wurde aus einer leidenschaftlichen Liebesbeziehung eine lebenslange Freundschaft" (op. cit.: 28, ff. 1).

neu, du beugtest über die neuen/ Augen die freundliche Welt und wehrtest der fremden" (36). Rilke here employs an almost Lacanian model of 'symbolization'. Lacan contends that the primal experience of separation and alienation starts with the child's entry into the "symbolic order," the structures of language. The split between the unconscious and the conscious is caused by language and language is marked by societal imperatives – laws, rules, and codes of conduct taught by the mothers and fathers. Furthermore, Lacan tells us that language isolates the subject from the "real," the "signified," and confines it forever to the sphere of consciousness, the realm of signification and signifiers. The unconscious, on the other hand, remains in search of the "other," the signified, it has lost: "Wo, o wo ist der Ort – ich trag ihn im Herzen" (50), the speaker mourns.

The notion of an original androgynous whole is a classical theory dating back to Plato. The Platonic idea maintains that we have knowledge of a universal "absolute" within us. However, we forget this knowledge when we gain consciousness, though our subconsciousness – the soul in Plato's belief – contains and at times recollects this prior knowledge of the "floods of origin." The universe, Plato argues, is divided between appearance and reality, and our information about it is similarly divided between opinion and knowledge. We can only have opinions about the world of appearance, yet our soul holds within itself the true knowledge about the real world. Thus, man is forever defined through self-alienation – "wir sind nicht einig" (40) – as he is subconsciously aware of this ideal version of his other self. The child, on the other hand, does not differentiate between itself and the "other," and that is why the "lyrical I" yearns for the lost childhood and its innocent state of being, the less self-conscious interaction of the self and reality:

> O Stunden in der Kindheit,/ da hinter den Figuren mehr als nur/ Vergangnes war und vor uns nicht die Zukunft./ Wir wuchsen freilich und wir drängten manchmal,/ bald groß zu werden, denen halb zulieb,/ die andres nicht mehr hatten, als das Großsein./ Und waren doch in unserem Alleingehn/ mit Dauerndem vergnügt und standen da/ im Zwischenraume zwischen Welt und Spielzeug,/ an einer Stelle, die seit Anbeginn/ gegründet war für einen reinen Vorgang (44).

The portrait of the child serves to epitomize the speaker's longing for a world in which consciousness and object, namely the toy, still interacted purely without disrupting the self from reality. Through the play of the child "kommt zusammen, was wir immerfort/ entzwein, indem wir da sind" (44). Because man, the 'mothers and fathers', is a social being he cannot but try to influence his world and anticipate the outcome. Thus, the state of "childlike" harmony is only temporary, since even the small child "wenden wir um und zwingens, daß es rückwärts/ Gestaltung sehe, nicht das Offne, das/ im Tiergesicht so tief ist. Frei von Tod" (66).

Due to the fact that humankind is banished from the realm of essence, and thus forced to exist plainly in a meaningless world, only a true hero, the speaker succinctly reflects in his next elegy, might be the happiest among his fellow beings. The hero's existence is simply that: he exists for his own pleasure without expectations, pretense, limitations, and norms. "Wunderlich nah ist der Held doch den jugendlich Toten. Dauern/ ficht ihn nicht an. Sein Aufgang ist Dasein" (54), the speaker enviously contends. This insight on the speaker's part is significant for the understanding of why the seventh elegy is so very different in its tone from the previous ones. "Werbung nicht mehr, nicht Werbung, entwachsene Stimme,/ sei deines Schreies Natur" (58), starts the seventh elegy with "a voice that has reached maturity" (Pettersson, 734). After having carefully thought about every station in life – from infancy to childhood, from adolescence to adulthood, from birth to death – the "lyrical I" has acquired a new appreciation of life. To live a full life is a *heroic* effort in itself and humankind does not need the angels' comfort. On the contrary, the angels should be in awe of humankind's achievements: "O staune, Engel, denn *wir* sinds,/ wir, o du Großer, erzähls, daß wir solches vermochten, mein Atem/ reicht für die Rühmung nicht aus" (62). With his "Adern voll Dasein" (60), the speaker disdainfully dismisses the angels' order and directs his attention now wholeheartedly to the task at hand – to put forward answers to the question of how to live in this irrational and meaningless, world and to find ways of dealing with one's existence so as to make life meaningful. In order to teach others his newly developed wisdom, the speaker aims his and our focus to the realm of nature, to the animals to be precise.

Like Heinrich von Kleist before him, Rilke sees the "brute," the animal, superior to human beings. The animal's lack of consciousness and reflection unites it with its environment. Its existence is purely instinctive, innocent, unproblematic, and without the inner disruption that man's self-consciousness affects. The animal's own being, the speaker informs us, "ist ihm/ unendlich, ungefaßt und ohne Blick/ auf seinen Zustand, rein, so wie sein Ausblick./ Und wo wir Zukunft sehn, dort sieht es Alles/ und sich in Allem und geheilt für immer" (68). The animal lacks "die innere Gespaltenheit des Selbstbewußtseins [...] während das menschliche Leben ein immerwährendes Etwas-Tun, bewußtes und gegenständliches Dasein [...] bedeutet"[26]. Man's ill fortune is that he cannot observe his world without distinct definitions and demarcations: "Immer ist es Welt/ und niemals Nirgends ohne Nicht" (66). The hero and the young child comprehend the idea of "knowing without craving," and are on that account closer to the domain of nature, and for this reason to a more wholesome or "truer" form of existence than "wir: Zuschauer, immer, überall" (70)[27]. To open our perception to the unknown, the "Offene," or in other words "den reinen Raum" (66), we have to learn to let go of our preconceptions to be able to mend the "split in our existence that human consciousness causes"[28].

The textual structure of the elegies' is defined by the division into "menschliche[ ] und kreatürliche[ ] Erlebensweise," as Manfred Engel writes (*Moderne Lyrik,* 176). Thus, on a narrative level, the reader encounters numerous levels of dichotomies, complementary oppositions, and "interrelated multiple contrasts" (Pettersson, 737). Rilke uses the thought of humankind's inherent need to reflect and compare to construct the lyrical form of his elegies in a likewise manner – it is contrastive and antithetic. The most obvious level is composed around the contrast of the animal realm and humankind's perception of reality. Within the human reality we find the polarities of childhood and adulthood, the lovers and the lonely hearts, life and death. On another level, Rilke takes everyday occurrences and "Oberflächenerscheinungen" (van Stockum, 111) and contrasts them with their counterparts. To list just a few, we come upon:

- Elegy I: beauty *vs*. terror; full *vs*. empty; silence *vs*. sound; human world *vs*. cosmic space
- Elegy II: humankind *vs*. divinity
- Elegy III: familiar *vs*. unfamiliar; order *vs*. chaos; light *vs*. darkness; water *vs*. fire; love *vs*. hate
- Elegy IV: past *vs*. future; decay *vs*. growth; lovers *vs*. enemies
- Elegy V: joy *vs*. despair; misery *vs*. bliss
- Elegy VI: sleep *vs*. awake; young *vs*. old; sweet *vs*. bitter
- Elegy VII: negation *vs*. affirmation; inner *vs.* outer; visible *vs.* invisible
- Elegy VIII: finite *vs.* infinite; consciousness *vs.* unconsciousness
- Elegy IX: departure *vs.* arrival; heavenly *vs.* earthly; known *vs.* unknown
- Elegy X: transience *vs.* permanence; lamenting *vs.* rejoicing; pain *vs.* comfort

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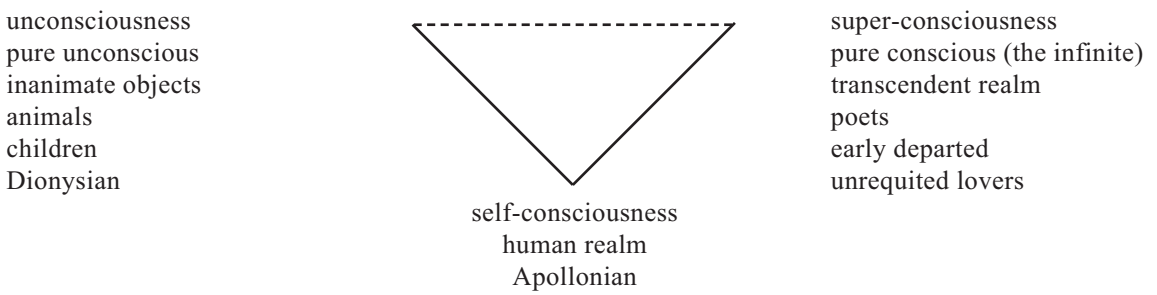
[26] Cf. Th.C. van Stockum, "Der gedankliche Hintergrund von Rilkes Duineser Elegien," *Neophilologus,* 32 (1948): 112. See also Jacob Steiner's essay "Zeit und Raum in den Duineser Elegien," *Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft,* 20 (1993): 11-21. Steiner writes: "Das Wesen der Engel und das Dasein der einfachen Kreatur besagen ex negativo schon viel über den Menschen. Er verstellt sich mit einem Bewußtsein das 'Offene' und das 'Freie' der unmittelbaren Befindlichkeit in der 'Schöpfung'. Er ist nicht in der Schöpfung wie die Kreatur, sondern ihr 'zugewendet', das heißt, er steht ihr 'gegenüber'" (12).

[27] Rilke explained his eighth elegy in a letter from February 25, 1926, saying that, "diese Achte Elegie ruft ja indessen den Liebenden nur vorübergehend auf, um eine menschliche Verfassung zu zeigen, die, einen Augenblick, jene Sicht ins Offene gewähren mag, von der ich vermute, daß sie des Tieres (in unserem Sinne) 'Sorglossein' ausmacht. Sie müssen den Begriff des 'Offenen', den ich in dieser Elegie vorzuschlagen versucht habe, *so* auffassen, daß der Bewußtseinsgrad des Tieres es in die Welt einsetzt, ohne daß es sie sich (wie wir es tun) jeden Moment gegenüber stellt; das Tier ist *in* der Welt; wir stehen *vor ihr* durch die eigentümliche Wendung und Steigerung, die unser Bewußtsein genommen hat [...] Mit dem 'Offenen' ist also nicht Himmel, Luft und Raum gemeint, auch *die* sind, für den Betrachter und Beurteiler, 'Gegenstand' und somit 'opaque' und zu" (*Letters,* 326).

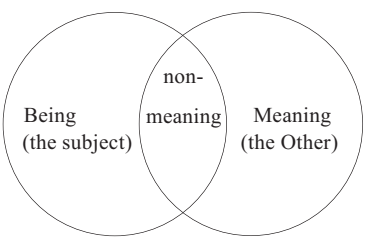
[28] Cf. David Oswald, "Rilke's importance to Jungian Psychology," *Rilke-Rezeptionen/Rilke Reconsidered*, Eds. Sigrid Bauschinger and Susan L. Cocalis (Tübingen: Francke, 1995): 138. In a similar manner Jacob Steiner writes, "der Mensch [ist] durch sein Bewußtsein gezwungen [...], immerfort die Welt zu deuten. Er stellt sein eigenes Ich in den Mittelpunkt und deutet von da aus die Zeit als Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft" (13).

As shown, nouns, verbs, and adjectives are constantly differentiated from their antonyms, and through this process deconstruct their own meaning. Additionally, on yet another level, Rilke employs words that pertain to our five senses: "hören" (22, 24); "Geruch" (28); "schmecken" (30, 42); "greifen" (30); "berühren" (32); "schauen" (42). Again, Rilke puts them in opposition to their antipodes, such as "unsäglich" (30, 74); "unkenntlich" (34); "lautlos" (38, 52); "unsichtbar" (76). Once more, the meaning of these words is continually undermined by their opposites. Clearly, Rilke tells us that, although we can perceive the phenomenal world with our senses, we do not have a sense for that which is unknown and invisible. Also, senses are subjective and can sometimes deceive us. This Kantian logic then leaves us with the outcome that nothing really exists as it is presented, and we are ultimately left with nothing but a chain of essentially empty signifiers without a signified.

In order to clarify some of Rilke's philosophical assumptions in his *Elegies*, we have to examine his underlying and fundamental belief about transitory human existence and that of pure essence. Rilke puts the human realm of self-consciousness between the spheres of unconsciousness, where he situates inanimate objects, animals and children, and super-consciousness, i.e., the transcendent realm of absolute essence. The following diagram will illustrate Rilke's thesis[29]:



As shown, the human realm is both open to the unconscious space that animals inhabit, and to the transcendental sphere to which unrequited lovers have access – "Menschen," as Manfred Engel puts it, "[haben] an beiden Bereichen teil[ ], ohne je einem ganzen anzugehören" ("Verstehen", 13). Although the similarity of Rilke's thoughts to those of Heinrich von Kleist in his famous piece "On the Puppet Theater" is obvious, Rilke, in opposition to Kleist, sees a forward progression towards the realm of the super-consciousness as the solely possible way of getting closer to the very core of existence, essence, and reality[30]. Borrowing from Lacan's model of alienation, one could say that the subject has to attempt to include essence into existence without getting separated from its existence or "Being," as Lacan calls it, i.e., without losing itself in nothingness. Explaining the "root of alienation," Lacan came up with this illustration[31]:

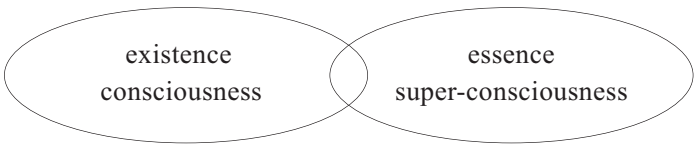


29 Also see Kathleen L. Komar, op. cit.: 10.

30 Kurt Bergel writes in his essay "Rilke's Fourth Duino Elegy and Kleist's essay *Über das Marionettentheater*," *Modern Language Notes,* 60 (1945), that Rilke had become very familiar with Kleist's works after he had asked his publisher Anton Kippenberg in 1913 "to send him a complete edition of Kleist's works" (73).

31 Cf. Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (New York: Norton, 1981): 211.

Lacan explains his diagram in this way: "If we choose being, the subject disappears, it eludes us, it falls into non-meaning. If we choose meaning, the meaning survives only deprived of that part of non-meaning that is, strictly speaking, that which constitutes in the realization of the subject, the unconscious. In other words, it is of the nature of this meaning, as it emerges in the field of the Other, to be in a large part of its field, eclipsed by the disappearance of being" (211). If we slightly alter and transfer this illustration to Rilke's *Elegies*, the drawing would look as follows:



Quoting from Lacan, we could state that "if we choose existence as subject, we deprive ourselves of essence and meaning, but if we choose essence, we cannot have existence." "Therefore, the choice, then, is a matter of knowing whether one wishes to preserve one of the parts" (Lacan, 211). The speaker in Rilke's *Elegies* chooses existence, and willingly accepts his humanness and destiny,

> Weil Hiersein viel ist, und weil uns scheinbar/ alles das Hiesige braucht, dieses Schwindende, das/ seltsam uns angeht. Uns, die Schwindendsten. Einmal/ jedes, nur einmal. Einmal und nichtmehr. Und wir auch/ einmal. Nie wieder. Aber dieses/ einmal gewesen zu sein, wenn auch nur einmal:/ *irdisch* gewesen zu sein, scheint nicht widerrufbar (72).

Still, he also realizes that authenticity as a human being includes the realization of the transitory human condition. We have a life that ultimately leads to death, and though we dread that conclusion, it is nevertheless part of the cycle. Comprehending that birth and death – the unequivocal state of absolute essence – form a totality, that is, we have to become familiar with the "vertrauliche Tod" (76), will make us aware of our finitude. In the end, this awareness constitutes our sense of meaning and essence, responsibility, and our freedom for transformation. That is why the speaker no longer woos the angels and he advises us to do the same:

> Preise dem Engel die Welt, nicht die unsägliche, ihm/ kannst du nicht großtun mit herrlich Erfühltem; im Weltall,/ wo er fühlender fühlt, bist du ein Neuling. Drum zeig/ ihm das Einfache, das, von Geschlecht zu Geschlechtern gestaltet,/ als ein Unsriges lebt neben der Hand und im Blick./ Sag ihm die Dinge (74-76).

As a result, "[erwächst] aus der positiven Einstellung zu den vergänglichen Dingen und aus deren produktivem Rühmen [...] dem Ich die positive Einstellung zur eigenen Vergänglichkeit. Dann ist der Tod nicht mehr der feindliche Gegensatz zum Leben wie in der gedeuteten Welt, sondern er ist 'vertraulich' geworden" (Steiner, 20). It is therefore no mystery why the last elegy is filled with the speaker's exhilaration, even though its imagery evokes pain and suffering. The allegory of the "city of pain" (79) and the "landscape of lamentation" (83) that the speaker relates is essential to the interpretation of the whole cycle of the *Elegies*, as it portrays to us that "rather than attempting to curtail our suffering, we should [...] accept it as a part of existence that is both perdurable and somehow beautiful" (Pettersson, 741). Then, and only then can we find "einen heileren Zustand in der Mitte des eigenen Wesens"[32].

An adequate platform for providing a glimpse of a meaningful state of being is, in Rilke's opinion, poetry as the poet is closest to the realm of transcendence. Similar to Thomas Mann, the mediating stance of the artist plays a crucial role in Rilke's works. Rilke saw the function of art as

[32] About the many failed attempts at interpreting the tenth elegy, Pettersson writes: "Within the traditional interpretation, critics have had difficulties fitting the Tenth Elegy into their account of the cycle because it seems to take off in a new direction; it has even been suggested that the cycle would be better off without it" (740).

mediation between humankind and a transcendent realm, which he, however, did not perceive as a divine sphere, but rather as the "other" side of reality, i.e., the essence of being. In his "Marginalien zu Friedrich Nietzsche," Rilke writes, "das Dionysische Leben ist ein unbegrenztes In-Allem-Leben, zu dem der Alltag sich wie eine lächerliche kleine Verkleidung verhält. Aber da vermittelt die Kunst die Erfahrung, daß diese Verkleidung die einzige Möglichkeit bietet von Zeit zu Zeit in die großen Zusammenhänge einzutreten, die, über Momente und Metamorphosen hin, sich ausspannen"[33]. Consequently, art's task is twofold: it has to make humankind realize its limitations and will simultaneously bring about a heightened (self-)consciousness to enable man to reexperience reality. "Künstlerische Tätigkeit wird damit zum Paradigma [...] eines herrschaftsfreien, spontanen und spielerischen Bezugs zwischen Ich und Welt, Ich und Du" (Engel, "Verstehen" 18).

While Rilke explores the different stages of consciousness in the first part of his *Elegies* and feels trapped in the human condition, that is, the existence of his consciousness, he comes to realize during this exploration that humankind cannot move backwards to an unconscious state of being, like that of the animal, but rather needs to move forward towards the realm of super-consciousness. The solution that Rilke posits is the act of internalizing the outside world, to bring about the union of self and world, inside and outside, subject and object: "Nirgends, Geliebte, wird Welt sein, als innen. Unser/ Leben geht hin mit Verwandlung. Und immer geringer/ schwindet das Außen" (60). Since humankind is faced with nothingness and the inevitability of passing away, it needs to reflect about the transience of its existence and the imminence of death as both parts of the circle of life, the "yin and yang." The freedom of will, even though, as Schopenhauer would suggest, it might cause us pain, has to become the driving and determining force. As Rilke writes in a letter on January 6, 1923,

> Ich will nicht sagen, daß man den Tod *lieben* soll; aber man soll das Leben so großmütig, so ohne Rechnen und Auswählen lieben, daß man unwillkürlich ihn (des Lebens abgekehrte Hälfte) immerfort mit einbezieht, ihn mitliebt [...] Unser effort (dies ist mir immer deutlicher geworden mit den Jahren, und meine Arbeit hat vielleicht nur noch den *einen* Sinn und Auftrag, von dieser Einsicht, die mich so oft unerwartet überwältigt, immer unparteiischer und unabhängiger ... seherischer vielleicht, wenn das nicht zu stolz klingt ... Zeugnis abzulegen), ... unser effort, mein ich, kann *nur* dahin gehen, die *Einheit* von Leben und Tod vorauszusetzen, damit sie sich uns nach und nach erweise (*Letters,* 283).

Rilke proposes that humankind build a meaningful relationship with an absolute, but to do so, needs to strive for complete self-realization beforehand. And as such, on man alone depends the possibility of creating a meaningful and authentic existence. In the end, the speaker comes to terms with the "phenomenal world," and confirms the human existence with all its flaws by joyously shouting "Hiersein ist herrlich" (60)[34].

After a long and oftentimes painful searching for the meaning of existence, the "lyrical I" realizes that interaction with the physical world rather than flight will help humankind to escape from its solipsism. He finally claims "that true joy only makes itself known to us when we are open to it within our consciousness, when we, like the child at play, can take in the outside world and transform it within our consciousness to create the unity that we lose by our alienated self-consciousness" (Komar 130). This rejuvenated awareness of the power within the self allows the poet to shift his poetic aim away from transcendence, the topic that, for example, romanticism depicted, toward the

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33 Cf. Rainer Maria Rilke, "Marginalien zu Friedrich Nietzsche-'Die Geburt der Tragödie'," *Sämtliche Werke*, Vol. 12 (Frankfurt: Insel, 1975): 1165.

34 In a letter from October 9, 1918, at the conclusion of World War I, Rilke writes: "Ich habe mich alle die Jahre nicht gefragt (es wäre unvorsichtig gewesen es zu tun), wie sehr ich noch bei aller Trübsal, Wirrnis und Entstellung der Welt an die großen, an die vollkommenen, weithin unerschöpflichen Möglichkeiten des Lebens glaube [...] Und da bekenne ich denn [...], daß ich das Leben für ein Ding von der unantastbarsten Köstlichkeit halte, und daß die Verknotung so vieler Verhängnisse und Entsetzlichkeiten, die Preisgebung so zahlloser Schicksale, alles, was uns diese letzten Jahre zu einem immer noch zunehmenden Schrecken unüberwindlich angewachsen ist: mich nicht irre machen kann an der Fülle und Güte und Zugeneigtheit des Daseins" (*Letters,* 147).

newly defined task of modern art, which is transformation. With that concept in mind, the poet then is able to teach his fellow human beings to be more receptive to reality, to experience existence in every moment, through every object, be it inanimate or animate[35].

A closer look at Rilke's work shows the modern writer's concern with the superficiality of existence and reality. Rilke endeavors to break the surface in order to get beneath it, to unveil the fallacy of the phenomenal world. He tries to search for the unknowable behind the obvious structure of order, the hidden inside underneath the outside, and thus brings the deceptive physical world into question. Humankind's crisis, its limited perception and existence, is caused by its fractured relationship with the world around it. It can only be mended if the self and reality, the subject and object try to establish a correlation in which the dialectics of subject and object are annihilated. Then, and only then, can they partake in an envisioned wholeness, a condition strongly advocated by Rilke in his elegies.

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[35] Similarly, Rilke writes in the "Marginalien zu Friedrich Nietzsche" about the poet, his art, and his responsibility towards mankind: "Etwas *den Menschen* (und nicht den Menschen eines Standes, einer Zeit, einer Moral*) den Menschen überhaupt* Gemeinsames muß hinter der Handlung, wie eine verbindende Erinnerung, die *sie alle einer gemeinsamen Kindheit* [emphasis added] sich besinnen heißt, aufstehen und *dort*, *nicht* innerhalb der verhältnismäßig zufälligen Szene, muß sich das Bedeutende, Erlösende ereignen" (1168).

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 207-210

Play with lie, illusion and fantasy in Thomas Mann's novel *Confessions of the Confidence Trickster Felix Krull*

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Thomas Mann's unfinished novel, *Confessions of the Confidence Trickster Felix Krull*, written with numerous interruptions and supplements in the period from 1910 to 1954, is distinguished by a lively and intellectually rich panorama of human creativity. The main character, Felix Krull, succeeds in getting from the province, the Rhine Valley, via Frankfurt to Paris.

> *The Rhine Valley brought me forth – that richly blessed and benign region, harsh neither in its climate nor in the quality of its soil, rich in cities and villages, peopled by a merry folk – it must be among the sweetest regions of the habitable globe*[1].

The starting-point is his flight after the death of his father, a manufacturer of sparkling wine and a playboy. His brand of sparkling wine with an artistic label is called *Lorley extra cuvée*. The deceptions of the sparkling wine manufacturer with the aid of the self-proclaimed Professor Schimmelpreester lead ultimately to the company's collapse. The factory owner saves himself by committing suicide. Professor Schimmelpreester advises the remaining members of the family with regard to re-establishing their existences. Krull's mother opens a boarding house in Frankfurt with the still well-known sparkling wine name, *Lorley*. Krull's sister, Olympia, finds a position with an operetta company. He himself gets out of his impending military service by simulating an attack of epilepsy. He calls the staff doctor undertaking the medical fitness examinations *Surgeon General* (p. 92), *colonel* (p. 94) and *Surgeon-in-chief* (p. 97), in order with these forms of address to ingratiate himself with him and put him in a benevolent mood, adding that he intended *to devote myself to hotel service* (p. 93).

Professor Schimmelpreester asks his former colleague, Stürzli, for a free trainee position for his nephew at the Hotel Saint James and Albany in Paris. On the way to France, Krull meets the wife of a manufacturer, Mme Houpflé, at the border in Strasbourg. Fate will have it that she stays at the same

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[1] Thomas Mann *Confessions of the Confidence Trickster Felix Krull* translated by Denver Lindley, Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc. New York and Toronto/Canada, first Vintage International Edition April 1992, p. 4, originally published in German as *Bekenntnisse des Hochstaplers Felix Krull: Der Memoiren erster Teil* in 1954.

hotel where he is to be a trainee. The carousel of amorous adventures, deceptions and small acts of fraud starts turning. At the same time, Krull climbs up the career ladder from trainee to lift boy, from lift boy to waiter. His conduct is impressive: his manners, his exquisite politeness and flexibility in roles enable him to turn many unexpected events and encounters to his own favour. Krull's confidence trickery is manifest not least of all in his involved, stilted and high-flown language of which he is proud and which is full of the superficial knowledge of a semi-educated person.

> *As to my natural instinct for good form, that is something I have always been able to count on all too well, as my whole career of fraud will prove, and in the present literary undertaking I believe I can rely on it implicitly.*(p. 4)

And at a later point:

> *Education is not won in dull toil and labour; rather it is the fruit of freedom and apparent idleness; one does not achieve it by exertion, one breathes it in [...]* (p. 74/75).

Frequently he does precisely the opposite to what is expected of him merely in order to please the person opposite and to adapt himself to the fine society in which he moves. In this way, an episode between himself, the little Eleonore Twentyman and Lord Kilmanrock from Birmingham unfolds. The young girl had fallen head over heels in love with him, but Krull asks her not to take him too seriously. At the same time, there is an affair with Lord Kilmanrock, a man about fifty, who asks Krull to come to his castle in Aberdeen, where he lives with his sister, to be his servant. He would only have to serve him personally. But Krull resists the temptation to flee with Eleonore and evades the Lord's offer by claiming that he would not be a match for the position, even though Lord Kilmanrock offers to make him his heir.

In the round dance of his acquaintances in his role as waiter, he meets a range of people. The decisive one, however, is the Marquis Louis de Venosta, an elegantly dressed painter. Far from home at his parents estate in Luxembourg, he amuses himself with a pretty little woman, his girlfriend Zaza, who, however, cannot take her eyes off Krull. The marquis tells Krull of his worry that his parents want to send him on a one year's educational tour, a trip around the world with destinations in North and South America, the South Sea, Japan, Egypt, Constantinople, Greece and Italy, on which he is supposed to get to know a lot of people and in this way be torn out of his Bohemian lifestyle. The two men come to a friends' agreement that Krull should take over the first leg of the voyage and send Venosta's parents short travel reports from the various stations. Krull practises to perfection the marquis' handwriting in order to take on his role also on the plane of writing, including cashing a cheque at the bank. Now there is no longer any hindrance to the voyage.

The first station of the voyage is to be Lisbon. Venosta hands over the railway and ship tickets to Krull and gives him a splendid send-off. On the train Felix gets to know Professor Cuckoo, who is also travelling to Lisbon. Krull acts urbanely and starts to rave about Lisbon. The professor, who is a palaeontologist and the director of the Museum of Natural History in Lisbon, describes the people and architectural features of Lisbon. He then speaks of Krull himself and sees in him a sea-lily which Felix, who feels flattered, takes as a compliment. But the professor corrects him, telling him that it is not a flower but a kind of rooted animal found in the deep sea. They then introduce themselves to each other. As the Marquis de Venosta, Krull pretends to be a painter and artist. He also mentions his relations with mythology. He skilfully explains that his tutor had made a connection between himself and Hermes. This is an elegant divinity, says Professor Cuckoo, and both speak of Hermes' anatomical endowments in more detail. Krull lets himself go in erotically suggestive descriptions:

> *I won't speak of Hermes' famous legs, but think of a shapely feminine arm, an arm that embraces us if we are lucky.* (p. 270).

At the end of the conversation, the professor explains to him more precisely the make-up of the world.

Having arrived in Lisbon, Krull first sits himself down at a table in a cafe where he accidentally gets to know the professor's wife and daughter accompanied by a man. The eighteen-year-old daughter reminds him of Zaza in Paris. She is called Zouzou and resembles her mother a little. They introduce themselves, the professor's wife, Madame de Cuckoo da Cruz, her daughter, Suzanna, and Mr Hurtado, one of Professor Cuckoo's research staff. Krull announces his visit to the Museum of Natural History. Zouzou teases de Venosta away. But it is precisely this prickliness that gives him hope of being able to kiss these enticingly pursed lips. At the Museum of Natural History, Krull is met by Professor Cuckoo, who leads him through the history of animals and human beings.

A little later, Krull is invited to the professor's home. This time his wife is dressed even more elegantly and fascinates Krull once again. Krull thinks that Zouzou and Mr Hurtado are meant for each other. The conversation turns on the visit to the museum, the impressions motivating a sympathy with the universe, and architectural sights close to the city. Once again, Zouzou is very prickly, and Krull speaks of his further travel plans. He takes a botanical walk with Zouzou. The professor cannot come on the walk but assures him that Zouzou will introduce him to the tennis club. Zouzou agrees enthusiastically. Later, when they are alone, he speaks of love, but she resists and says that it is a completely indecent subject, and when he sees the nude drawings of Zaza, embellished with Zouzou's fringe, she is outraged. Krull calms her down by talking of beauty and promises to show her the nude drawings one day.

Krull writes a letter to de Venosta's parents that his departure has been delayed because of Professor Cuckoo who has enormously expanded the educational scope of his voyage. Apart from that, he says that he has even got to know the prince who, before he, Krull, departs, has offered to introduce him to his Majesty, King Juan Carlos I, who has also been staying in Lisbon. The audience would take several days and he would have to wait for the return of the Cap Arcona before he could travel on. He also asks his parents to pay his hotel bill for this period. He describes the audience, which was supposed to have taken place in the meantime, and how he had highly praised the visit to the king's country, which was perhaps one of the most beautiful countries on earth. He also praised the masterpieces of painting which turned out to have been done by the king himself. He also writes about his progress in playing tennis with Zouzou and her partner. Zouzou insists on taking possession of Krull's nude drawings. The parents respond to his report of delays that at first it had angered them somewhat, but in the meantime, they regarded the delay as a happy stroke of fate, especially because of the meeting with Professor Cuckoo.

Playing tennis followed by a small lunch at the professor's home always takes precedence over trips and excursions. Krull places special importance on being able to first tell Zouzou alone about his social encounters. When her mother, Senhora Maria Pia, makes a remark about his impression of the beauty of another woman, he emphasizes how much womanly beauty had impressed him already on the first day, while glancing toward Zouzou and also her mother. Zouzou continues to speak insultingly and childishly of love. Krull skilfully retracts the compliment for her mother and speaks of the beauty of touching one another in love, for instance, with a kiss. Zouzou repeatedly reminds him of the nude drawings she has not yet been given.

Krull's double portrait of mother and daughter shifts, sometimes toward the mother, sometimes toward the daughter, which throws somewhat of a shadow on the first portrait. Professor Cuckoo draws his attention to a bullfight, a corrida which, however, Krull views with timidity because *the sight of blood made me somewhat queasy* (p. 370). The professor calms him down but he is overcome by a feeling of uneasiness. At the cable car station he meets Dona Maria Pia in an elegant mantilla with her large, stern, pale, southern European face. Zouzou is not wearing a mantilla and is dressed in even darker clothes as if she were going to church. With the professor they travel to the centre of the action. The journey takes place in silence. The bull, black, heavy and powerful like an animal divinity, leaps into the arena and bores its horns into the cape. Bandarilheros are driven into the back of its neck. The torero, Don Ribeiro, falls down. There is applause. *More and more*, Krull notes of Donna Maria Pia, *the stern and elemental person of this woman seemed to me one with the game of blood below*. (p. 377). Ribeiro thrusts the blade of his sword into the ball which thereupon collapses. During the bullfight, Krull has completely forgotten about Zouzou. All the more decisively, he then shows her the promised drawings. For Maria Pia it is siesta hour. Zouzou takes the

nude drawings, tears them up, sits down on the bench, puts her arms around Krull's neck and hammers rhythmically with her fists on his chest. Suddenly her mother is standing before them. She wants to have a quiet word with Krull and accuses him of having abused her hospitality and calls on him to act like an adult. Under his acclamation and tenderness, she carries him into the realm of bliss.

If we view the most predominant features of the *Confessions of the Conference Trickster Felix Krull*, a strongly narcissistic and homoerotic component in Krull is striking which becomes noticeable in the conception of the torero Ribeiro, in Krull's fantasies about slim male legs (of Hermes), in his conspicuous, flashy clothing and his flattering beauty. In his twofold, androgynous nature he offers himself equally to women and men. In contrast to the main character in Thomas Mann's novella, *Death in Venice*, in which the artist, Aschenbach, is absorbed by his work, Krull expends himself in the arts of seduction and amorous games.

The role of the artist in society is a leitmotif in Thomas Mann's oeuvre. His conception of culture is linked existentially with an understanding of the artist as a preserver of the arts as manifested in the cultural journal, *Maß und Wert (Measure and Value)*, whose editor he was from 1937 to 1939. This is nothing less than the artist's responsibility for art and ethical conduct as opposed to the barbarism of those who despise humanity. Completely opposite this position held by Thomas Mann stands the ironical, parodistic treatment of the quasi-artist, Krull, whose qualities could also be assigned to an artist. Only the non-ethical use and limitation of self-reflection and the ability to discourse with others helps Professor Cuckoo to strip down the word that has been given to him in the most marvellous way and to shift the context of the mythological perspective into its proper light. Krull's superficial knowledge becomes apparent not least of all on his so-called educational voyage which he undertakes on behalf of the Marquis de Venosta. In his place, in his name, in his clothes and in his handwriting, he slips into a role whose basic stance he does not share: *Measure and Value*.

The predominance of superficial education becomes a key code for the dictatorship of unreason. Cuckoo saves reason from the superficial knowledge of the fraudulent play-actor, Krull. The play-actor is defined by changing roles and transformations tied to the rules of dramatic theatre and its literary authors. This also touches upon the ability to see oneself through the eyes and the mirror held up by others and to integrate this insight into relations with other people. In the case of Krull, this becomes a negative event. Only the effect is faith.

With this, the birth of German classicism at the court in Weimar is illuminated once again more precisely. No lesser person than Nietzsche clearly saw the dangers emanating from the educational philistine. Goethe's famous novel, *Wilhelm Meister*, is an educational novel par excellence. In it, too, Wilhelm Meister's son is called Felix.

Between Krull and a picaro who plays the main role in Cervantes picaresque novel, *Don Quixote*, there is a certain parallel, but the *Confessions of the Conference Trickster Felix Krull* are by no means exhausted by the features of a purely picaresque, artist's, educational or mythological novel.

It may seem far-fetched to speak of a symbolic journey into exile in the case of Krull's educational voyage. But could it not be the case that in the conception of the novel, Thomas Mann's circumstances and his existential experiences also played a role? We know with certainty that the novel was written in various phases (begun in 1910, continued, read to audiences, partially published and finally officially published in 1954). It should be noted that when Thomas Mann was editor of the journal, *Maß und Wert*, from 1937 to 1939, at the same time near Weimar the concentration camp Buchenwald was erected, so that his first novel in exile, *Lotte in Weimar* from 1939, was perhaps precipitated by the experience of how an assiduous dedication to culture can turn into barbarism.

The *Confessions of the Confidence Trickster Felix Krull* is Thomas Mann's most frequently published novel but, despite all the novel's popularity and with all due respect to readers, one should nevertheless not forget the *Zauberberg* (*Magic Mountain*). Even though the novel is described as unfinished and its continuation was considered (one could think of the various stations of the voyage which still had to be visited, such as South America, from where Thomas Mann's mother came), Thomas Mann himself said that he could have kept on writing forever and that in this way the novel could have taken a somewhat Kafkaesque turn.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 211-214

Paul Auster's New Jewishness in the USA: An Analysis of *The Invention of Solitude*

*REIKO NITTA**

INTRODUCTION

After World War II, Jewish-American writers like Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamud and Philip Roth introduced Jewish-immigrant experiences and created a new literary trend in American literature. However, the Jewish-immigrant milieu familiar in their novels has been lost since the late 1970s and today's Jewish American writers are far more acculturated into US society. In the younger Jewish writers, therefore, we find a different type of Jewishness, more subjective Jewishness, which Stuart Hall might classify as "the new ethnicity."

Here, I will discuss Paul Auster's *The Invention of Solitude* (1982) in order to show what an original achievement today's Jewish American writers make through their Jewishness. Auster is a third-generation Jewish American writer and has been influenced not only by Jewish and American cultures but also by postmodernism in the 1970s and the 80s and the French literature he majored in.

The Invention of Solitude, his first novel, reveals his fundamental attitude toward writing under these influences.

AUSTER'S NEW JEWISHNESS

In this book, Auster openly and humorously declares his distance from Jewish customs. In the first section of the book, "Portrait of an Invisible Man," he reveals a much stronger affinity for baseball, as he also does in the second section of the book, "The Book of Memory." In this section Auster describes himself as A., and A. associates a solemn Jewish religious custom with a flippant reaction in baseball:

> In his own Jewish childhood, A. can remember confusing the last words of the Passover Seder, "Next year in Jerusalem," with the ever-hopeful refrain of disappointed fandom, "Wait till next year," as if the one were a commentary on the other: to win the pennant was to enter the promised land (117).

The Passover is the celebration of freedom to commemorate Israel's deliverance from the enslavement in Egypt. To pleadge "Next year in Jerusalem" at the end of this festival, therefore,

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expresses their hope to end their hardship as a race in exile. Equating such serious Jewish wishes with the zeal of baseball-fans could easily involve profanity but Auster is so innocent that he only produces laughter.

Ultimately, Auster seems to emphasize that he is so detached from the Jewish traditions which connect Jews to the notion of nation and race, that he feels neither sympathy nor antipathy towards them. Paradoxically, however, he must know Jewish customs enough to depict his distance from them so humorously as he did. The highlighting of his Americanization is only achieved by deconstructing the traditional Jewishness for his personal and original purpose.

AUSTER'S DECONSTRUCTION OF OLD JEWISHNESS

Auster deconstructs old Jewishness more intentionally in the murder case in which his father's mother killed her husband. In order to explain this case, Auster quotes an article from a newspaper of those days and ascribes the murder to common causes for marriage troubles, such as trouble with money and the husband's extramarital relationship. In his grandmother's confession, however, it is casually mentioned that she spoke almost no English. It intimates that she was suffering from a typical first generation immigrant experience – helpless isolation in a strange land. Her husband must have been the only person she could rely on in the US and when he betrayed her, she could have been easily driven to murder in despair. Still, Auster completely avoids associating the murder with her immigrant experience.

Likewise Auster does not consider that the case might have been easily dismissed simply because it was concerned only with Jews – outsiders in the Anglo-Saxon US society at that time. Nor does he relate his father's inner isolation, his submission to the caprice of life and his holding on to money as a safety net, to his family's poverty and isolation caused by the verdict, though all of these characteristics have long been treated as typical Jewish Diaspora traits by many Jewish American writers.

Auster, therefore, does not describe his father objectively enough to present him as he was. Though Auster claims that he wrote about his father to remember him, he analyzes his father's Jewish experience from his own point of view and searches for his own life, as Michel Contat points out in the interview: "You give birth to him [your father] by writing about him and at the same time you give birth to yourself as a writer" (182).

In fact, when his father died on Jan. 15, 1979, Auster needed to re-establish his life. He was in a terrible plight as he recounted in the interview with Adam Begley: "I had run into a wall with my work. I was blocked and miserable, my marriage was falling apart. I had no money. I was finished" (53). When his father's money allowed him to concentrate on writing, he seized the opportunity not only to write about his father but also to rethink his own life as a writer.

A more obvious example of Auster's deconstruction of old Jewishness for the search of his own identity is observed in the way he handles the Jewish father-son relationship. Stephen Fredman points out, "Within the masculine genealogy of this text, all of A.'s hopes for regeneration are transferred to his son" (29). *The Invention of Solitude* actually emphasizes the heritage which Auster received from his father and his grandfather, and transmits to his own son, David. The father-son relationship in this book, however, fails to match the traditional Jewish father-son relationship, which Irving Malin describes as follows:

> There is honor between fathers and sons. The father is the benevolent teacher; the son is the obedient student. ... What is remarkable is that the father-son relationship is rarely hostile (32-33).

Malin further argues that in many Jewish American novels in the earlier days: "The archetypal Jew embraces the rule of the father; the archetypal American rebels against the father. Two mythic patterns clash: in this clash our writers find tense, symbolic meaning" (35).

Contrary to these earlier cases, Auster is neither benevolent nor hostile to his father. He loves his father enough to record his father's life for his father's sake but he has to declare: "Earliest memory: his absence" (20).

Consequently, the apparent structure of the Jewish father-son relationship in this book emphasizes Auster's lack of heritage and his need to search for his own identity for himself. In "The Book of Memory," Auster is convinced: "When the father dies, ... the son becomes his own father and his own son" (81). It is because he has to make his own father – his mental leader – by searching for a meaningful life for himself as well as to make his own son – his mental heir – to check if his life is really worthy enough to hand it down to the next generation.

THE MEANING OF "THE INVENTION OF SOLITUDE"

Auster thus deconstrucs traditional meanings of Jewishness in the search for his own identity. And this deed is related to the book's title, "the invention of solitude."

In the East European Jewry, Hassidism made much of telling old stories and anecdotes in its teaching. And both Auster's father and his grandfather on his mother's side were good at storytelling. Auster nevertheless cannot inherit their talent of storytelling as it was because both of them used their ability to retreat from the reality or to deceive themselves. Especially, his father was characterized by turning his back on the real world in order to retreat into himself, which Auster regards as "solitary."

Such a "solitary" state isolates one's mind and keeps one from looking into oneself in any relation with other people.

On the other hand, Auster does not attach any negative connotations to the term "solitude" as he asserts in the interview with Larry McCaffery and Sinda Gregory: "you don't begin to understand your connection to others until you are alone. And the more intensely you are alone, the more deeply you plunge into a state of solitude, the more deeply you feel that connection" (315).

"Solitude" isolates one only physically and extends one's mind deeply and widely into the world.

In "The Book of Memory," for example, A. visits a great artist, S. in his extremely small room and finds "an entire universe" (89) in it. It is what Auster aims to do as a writer. Though he confines himself in his room to write, he tries to be connected to the outside world as widely as possible.

To invent meaningful solitude as a writer, he is required to look into his innermost mind and reconsider his background. This is why, in *The Invention of Solitude,* he adopted an autobiographical form. And yet, in order to be connected to the outside world, he deconstructs his father's Jewish experience by means of his acquired elements such as postmodernism, American experiences, American literature and French literature, and completely generalizes it. Thus, towards the end of the second part of the book, he mixes Jewish and non-Jewish materials intentionally and ostentatiously. And when he is caught in a prison of hopelessness and finds his sole consolation in his son's image, he soon extends his son's image into a more generalized image: "And not just his son, but any son, any daughter, any child of any man or woman" (156).

THE EVALUATION OF AUSTER'S JEWISHNESS

Auster does not use Jewishness as Bellow, Malamud, and Roth did. Instead, he deconstructs it with other elements he has as a member of a younger Jewish American generation. Thus, Jewishness seems to be, in one way, less important to him than to Bellow, Malamud and Roth. Besides, Kobayashi-Kenji explains that one of the postmodern characteristics is the intentional intrusion and transgression of genres and borders without defining or limiting anything in the intrinsic instability of

the contemporary culture[1]. Auster's free and unique usage of multiple elements, therefore, could be easily labeled as a typical postmodern technique, and not as a Jewish characteristic.

Auster also insists in the interview with Komazawa-Toshiki that he should be defined, if anything, as an American writer[2]. Likewise, in the interview with Mark Irwin, Auster agrees with Irwin's opinion that "part of the American-ness of poetry and the novel is 'to let everything in' as opposed to the more European notion 'to control it'" (334). Then he asserts, "I feel that I want to stay open to everything, that there's nothing that can't be an influence" (334).

Hence, it would be safe to say that Auster's Jewishness is only one of many affiliations that make him a very American writer. Yet, it is because of his Jewishness in combination with his other aspects that he could produce a unique and original contemporary American work. Actually, there is something more assertive in Auster's Jewishness than Henry Bial finds in his assessment of recent plays by Jewish American writers and producers: "Quite frequently, what a spectator identifies as Jewishness is equivocal, affective, and not exclusively Jewish" (18). If it is equivocal, it is completely up to the audience (or the reader) to recognize it as Jewish, as Bial himself admits: "Knowing the codes, reading Jewish, can be a way to affirm one's membership in an imagined community of American Jews" (20). In contrast, Auster's Jewishness is indispensable in creating his original literary world and it cannot be ignored if we are to appreciate his works to the full. And this is probably why Dennis Barone points out the substantial presence of Auster's Jewishness as follows: "It is interesting to note that while Auster does not provide an explicit centrality for Judaism in his work, the Jewish tradition is ever present" (23).

1 Kobayashi-Kenji, 275.

2 Komazawa-Toshiki, 107.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 215-219

Waste in Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*

ANDREW GORDON[*]

Bernard Malamud's novel *The Assistant* reminds me of the joke about a man in love with his proctologist. He struggles to find a way to express his feelings. Finally, he goes to the doctor's office and says he has something up his ass. The doctor straps on the rubber gloves and tells him to lie on the examining table. He probes, but finds nothing. The man tells the doctor to dig deeper, then deeper still. At last, the proctologist says, "Yes, there does seem to be some sort of obstruction." Very carefully, he extracts it and holds it up to the light. Astonished, he exclaims, "Why, why – it's a rose!" "Yes", says his patient as he glances at the doctor. "Now read the note!"

As William Butler Yeats wrote, "But Love has pitched his mansion in/The place of excrement" ("Crazy Jane").

The three major characters in *The Assistant* (1957) – the grocer Morris Bober; his daughter Helen: and Frank Alpine, his assistant – are in many respects similar characters with similar kinds of inner conflicts. All three seem stuck in the phase of development Erik Erikson calls autonomy versus shame and doubt. Their conflicts are over anal issues, and revolve around problems with time and self-control. Thus the novel is filled with bad smells and persistent images of rot and garbage. Yet it ends with the image of a rose, seemingly grown out of all that waste.

Because *The Assistant* is structured as a kind of fable or moral allegory, all the concerns about garbage, waste, and stench, as well as related issues concerning money, time, order, and discipline, are not hidden but made manifest. Malamud seems well aware of both the moral and the psychological issues with which his central characters are dealing, although it is possible he may be unaware of how overdetermined the novel is.

To briefly recapitulate the plot: Morris Bober and his wife Ida, both about 60, are immigrant Jews who have for twenty-two years operated a small, mom-and-pop grocery store in a working-class section of Brooklyn. Although there are two other Jewish families on the block – the Karps, who own a thriving liquor store; and the Pearls, who run a candy store – it is a mixed, largely gentile neighborhood. Because of the Depression, times are tough, and the Bobers face stiff competition from newer groceries, so their business, which once barely eked out a living by staying open long hours, now goes from marginal to impossible. They want to sell the store but nobody is buying. Morris, the soul of honesty and charity, trusts customers who owe him money. At the end of the first chapter, he is robbed by two masked men. The leader, an anti-Semite angry at the small take, thinks Morris is holding back money and pistol-whips him on the head.

While Morris is recovering, a stranger starts hanging around the block. He is Frank Alpine, a 25-year-old Italian-American drifter. Frank offers to be the grocer's assistant for room and board so he

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can learn the trade. Ida objects, but Morris eventually takes him on. Soon we learn that Frank was one of the holdup men and is doing this as penance, although he conceals the truth from Morris.

Frank falls for Helen, the Bobers' 23-year-old daughter. Helen is frustrated that she must work full time to help support the family and has put off college. Unlike the Jewish men she has dated, Frank intrigues Helen because he has traveled and because he has lived a rough life but wants to better himself. In Frank, she sees potential. They meet at the local library and she gives him novels to read. But the suspicious Ida disapproves of the growing relationship because Frank is a bum and, worse yet to a Jewish mother, a Catholic.

At the heart of the novel is the moral transformation of Frank Alpine. The novel is Frank's rite of passage. Morris lost his son and Frank grew up in an orphanage, so the two bond almost like father and son, until Morris dies and Frank takes his place as grocer, head of the household, and Jew. Frank is continually torn between his good impulses – he loves Helen and keeps rescuing Morris and the store – and his evil ones – he spies on Helen in the shower and takes money from Morris' cash register. The plot is full of ups and downs, reversals and surprises. In the end, after Morris' death, Frank takes his place to keep the store going. Helen, who had shunned Frank because he raped her, seems to relent because of Frank's sacrifices for the family, but nothing is certain. In the last paragraph of the novel, Frank has himself circumcised and becomes a Jew, equivalent to his becoming a *mensch*.

The three central characters all have a bad relationship with time. Morris dreams of the past, when his son Ephraim was alive, but for him the present means doing hard time as a prisoner in the store. And the future seems to promise only more of the same. From the opening chapter:

> Now the store looked like a long dark tunnel.
>
> The grocer sighed and waited. Waiting he thought he did poorly. When times were bad time was bad. It died as he waited, stinking in his nose (4).

In the opening chapter, Helen too feels "as poor as her name sounded, with little promise of a better future" (14). She feels sorry for her father, who rarely leaves the store, but "Thinking about his life always left her with a sense of the waste of her own" (20). Helen's frustration with the stasis of her life is reflected in an image of Coney Island in the wintertime: "In the distance a dark Ferris wheel looked like a stopped clock".

For Frank, like Morris, time stinks. For Morris, the present is bad, dead and "stinking in his nose" (4), and for Frank, because of his festering guilt, the past is bad, poisoning the present, "the past that always stupendously stank up the now" (90).

With his burden of guilt, Frank "looked to Morris like someone who had to retch; no matter where" (34). When Frank refuses to be a partner in crime any longer with Ward, "Ward showed his disgust. 'The minute I saw you I knew you would puke all over'". He tells Frank, "I found out you were working for a Jew and living on bird crap" (73). Ward expresses a visceral disgust: Frank is weak and ready to confess, to spill his guts, and Frank eats crap. Later, after Frank has been living with the Jews for some time, Ward spits on him, saying, "You stinking kike" (145).

Like Ward, Frank at first tends to see positive human emotions in negative terms – as weak and embarrassing. When Morris expresses concern for Frank: "It made the clerk uncomfortable to see the wet-eyed old bird brooding over him. His pity leaks out of his pants, he thought..." (83). Frank thinks that Jews are masochistic. "That's what they live for, Frank thought, to suffer. And the one that has got the biggest pain in the gut and can hold onto it the longest without running to the toilet is the best Jew. No wonder they got on his nerves" (88). At this stage in his moral development, for Frank, pity is piss and suffering is shit.

Frank vacillates in his attitude toward working in the store. Sometimes he rejects it viscerally.

> "And there were days when he was sick to death of everything. He had had it, up to here...
> Thinking of Morris waiting on the same lousy customers day after day throughout the years,

> as they picked out with dirty fingers the same cheap items they ate every day of their flea-bitten lives, then when they were gone, waiting for them to come back again, he felt like leaning over the banister and throwing up" (86).

But what Frank really needs to throw up is his confession, which is why he looks to Morris like a man about to retch. Frank knows he must "start by shoveling out the load he was carrying in his mind by admitting to Morris that he was one of the guys that had held him up". Frank's feels his crime is something rotten within him, like excrement or puke, and he wants "to clean up the slate" (157). From the moment the burglary began, "he had got the sick feeling that he might someday have to vomit up in words, no matter how hard or disgusting it was to do, the thing he was then engaged in doing" (89). He feels

> a repulsive need to get out of his system all that had happened... to clean it out of his self and bring in a little peace, a little order; to change the beginning, beginning with the past that always stupendously stank up the now – to change his life before the smell of it suffocated him (90).

At one point in his life, after many failures, Frank had became a homeless person, and treated himself like garbage.

> After a time he gave up and let himself be a bum. He lived in gutters, cellars if he was lucky, slept in lots, ate what the dogs wouldn't, or couldn't, and what he scrounged out of garbage cans (91).

Then he resolved to elevate himself through a life of crime. "So he gave up his outhouse existence". Shortly after that, he meets Ward. "Ward sat down and told him that it was a Jew he planned to rob, so Frank agreed to go with him" (92). For Frank, caught in an anal mode, either he is garbage and treats himself like garbage, or else he imagines he can escape "his outhouse existence" by treating others the same way. The Jew, a low, foreign object, a "stinking kike" associated with money, or "filthy lucre," he considers an appropriate target.

When Helen gives Frank *Crime and Punishment* to read, the novel "repelled yet fascinated him, with everybody in the joint confessing to something every time he opened his yap – to some weakness, or sickness, or crime". He thinks at first that Raskolnikov "must be a Jew and was surprised when he found he wasn't". Frank still equates being a Jew with being debased, with weakness and suffering, and with dirt. "He felt, in places in the book, even when it excited him, as if his face had been shoved into dirty water in the gutter" (107). It is not surprising that the novel should repel yet fascinate him, for Frank and Raskolnikov are similar characters who vacillate between treating themselves as garbage and aspiring to become Napoleons of crime. "He had this crazy sensation that he was reading about himself" (108). *Crime and Punishment* mirrors Frank's need to confess and do penance in order to obtain absolution and self-forgiveness.

To woo Helen, Frank presents her with a book and a scarf, but she refuses his gifts. Disgusted, Frank throws them away, where Helen finds them "on top of some greasy garbage bags in the stuffed rubbish bin at the curb" (114). Helen retrieves them and tells Frank, "It was a terrible waste. You should have got your money back" (116). But Frank will not return them. Helen persists, and several days later tells Frank "'if there's anything I can't stand, it's waste'" (119), asking that he let her return the items to the store. Frank cuts her a deal, asking her to keep one and let him return the other. The entire exchange seems to return to the infant's gift of his excrement to the mother. The gift equals money, but rejected, it is merely garbage.

When Frank asks Helen to sleep with him, she refuses to do so unless she is sure she loves him. She says,

> "I don't want to dislike myself. I want to be disciplined, and you have to be too if I ask it. I ask it so I might someday love you without reservations".

> "Crap", Frank said, but then, to his surprise, the idea seized him. He thought of himself as disciplined, then wished he were... he remembered with regret and a strange sadness how often he wished for better control over himself, and how little of it he had achieved (140).

So Frank apologizes to Helen. It is significant, though, that his unthinking response is "'Crap.'" With its concern with discipline, control, and order, and its issues about appropriate timing, *The Assistant* makes the moral improvement of Frank Alpine seem like a question of toilet training.

Ward functions as Frank's anti-self. As Ward deteriorates both physically and morally throughout the novel, Frank grows stronger. When Ward attempts to rape Helen in the park, he is "dirty, smelling of whiskey" (165). He smothers her scream "with his smelly hand... Helen felt his body shuddering against her. I am disgraced, she thought, yet felt curiously freed of his stinking presence, as if he had dissolved into a can of filth and she had kicked it away" (167).

But after Frank rescues Helen, he becomes overexcited and completes the rape himself, acting as Ward's stand-in. When Helen rejects Frank, he hits rock bottom, and condemns himself as garbage:

> He lay in bed with the blankets pulled over his head, trying to smother his thoughts but they escaped and stank. The more he smothered them the more they stank. He smelled garbage in the bed and couldn't move out of it. He couldn't because he was in it – the stink in his own broken nose. What you did was how bad you smelled... The self he had secretly considered valuable was, for all he could make of it, a dead rat. He stank (174-175).

In one of the novel's many reversals, the same night Frank both rescues and rapes Helen, he also rescues Morris from being asphyxiated by a leaking gas radiator. Yet when Helen sees Frank rescuing her father, because Frank had just raped her, at first glance she misreads it as another rape, a homosexual one: "When she saw Frank in his pajamas bent over her father's back, her throat thickened in disgust. She screamed in fear and hatred" (178). In a novel about characters all fixated in the anal stage, it is not surprising to find images of buggery.

Frank now must atone for two crimes against the Bobers: the robbery of Morris and the rape of Helen. Frank feels he has "turned a good thing into bad," into garbage, and "the garbage smell stank in his nose" (192). He carves a wooden flower, but after he leaves it for Helen, he finds it discarded in a garbage can. "She was remote, sinned aginst, unfeeling, or if she felt, it was disgust of him. He cursed himself for having conceived this mess..." (237).

As Morris recovers in bed, the store below turns in his mind from prison to graveyard: "He heard heavy silence below. What else can you hear from a graveyard whose noiseless tombstones hold down the sick earth? The smell of death seeped up through the cracks in the floor" (195). Later, a man who starts fires for insurance fraud tempts Morris, saying, "It smells here... like an open grave" (211).

In the novel's moral allegory, Ward is an emblematic character, a moral degenerate who is a walking "can of filth" (167). Ward grows both more morally repugnant and physically rotten as the work progresses, until he dies. In his first appearance in the novel, as they rob Morris, Ward's mask is a snot rag, "a dirty yellow clotted" handkerchief as opposed to Frank's immaculate white handkerchief (25). Ward suffers from a progressive stomach disease and grows increasingly nauseated as the story continues. Frank feels a need to vomit up his crimes; Ward literally vomits. Ward dies surrounded by his moral and physical squalor. Just before he burns to death in the fire he accidentally sets while robbing Karp's liquor store, "a feeling of nausea gagged him and with a croak he threw up over Karp's counter".

Morris perishes because of his desire to escape the stink of the store. He goes out to shovel snow, telling Ida, "For twenty-two years stinks in my nose this store. I wanted to smell in my lungs some fresh air" (223). Ironically, he quickly contracts pneumonia and dies.

Frank takes over the store and even takes a second job at night to pay for Helen's education, to give her something that would not "end up in the garbage" (235), although Helen refuses to accept it. He even confesses to Helen his role in the robbery, although "his throat hurt, his stomach heaved. He clamped his teeth tight but the words came up in blobs, in a repulsive stream" (240).

The Assistant is thus a novel about waste, failure, sin, and guilt, and the desire to lead a better life, to "come clean." These themes are expressed in repeated imagery of garbage, vomit, and bad smells: the store stinks, and so do Ward and Frank. Frank must purge himself by vomiting up his crimes. Significantly, at Morris' funeral, where Frank is symbolically reborn out of Morris' grave, for the first time in the novel the air is "fragrant" (231).

Malamud created moral allegories with emblematic characters, and he draws on universal icons. In Frank's final dream, he imagines giving Helen a rose. *The Assistant* as a novel is like a rose flowering out of a heap of garbage.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 221-224

Loyola and Freud: Two schools of feeling

*HENK HILLENAAR**

Psychoanalysis did not fall from heaven. Many concepts and ideas that Freud would develop, particularly that of the human unconscious, can be found in the work of others before him. But he put things together, created a new way of thought and, what is more, a way of using it as a therapy. Psychoanalysis is a school where we learn to perceive, investigate and understand our feelings and to reorganise our life according to that experience. As a therapist, Freud was highly original and seems to have had no predecessors. There is, however, one exception, three and a half centuries before him, one that during a very long time and all over the Western world has had an influence which can be compared to Freud's role in our days. These were the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order. About 1530, after the cultural earthquake of Renaissance and Reformation, he wrote these *Exercises* as a 'school of feeling', a guidebook for those who, with the help of a spiritual leader, wanted to scrutinize methodically, during a long time, their inner life, to 'discern', as Ignatius called it, 'the good and bad spirits'[1], which were operating inside them, in order to reorganize their lives.

The differences between Ignatius and Freud must be clear to everyone. They have to do with the fact that religion and the idea of 'God' refer to a much more idealized world than Freud's 'unconscious'. The 'I' of Freud's analysis is his own centre, whereas, even if the God in Loyola's program would be unmasked as a projection of the father (or mother) figure, the 'I' here seems to turn around an inner centre which from the very beginning of the *Exercises* is a split one: 'you' – God – and 'I'. Yet analogies between psychoanalysis and these *Exercises* are even more striking. A 'relation to the unknown' (Guy Rosolato) – for Ignatius to God and the spirits, for Freud to the unconscious – is at the core of both experiences. Self-examination forms their main practice. They also share the same aim, a change of life. All kinds of rules, about place, time, body position, accompany both explorations of the mind which are surveyed by a leader to whom the maximal openness about thought and feelings is required. Imagination and fantasy are stimulated all the time and even transference plays a central part in both enterprises.

As often happens with important phenomena of social and cultural life, as different as theatre plays, orphanages or healthcare systems, they have had their predecessors in the world of religion. In many regards psychoanalysis can be considered as secularized *Spiritual Exercises*. After two centuries of Enlightenment, of victorious reason, Freud was the first scientist to show such a serious,

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1 This discernment – 'distinctio spirituum' – was in 1530 a modern, internalised version of the old 'probatio spirituum' the traditional public trial of the bad or heretical spirits active in a suspect person.

methodical interest in the antecedents or supports of that intelligence, in impressions, feelings, fantasies, passion, everything his colleagues tended to consider as secondary or even inferior. Freud wanted to show that reason often functioned as the humble servant of these irrational faculties.

When Ignatius, long before, conceived his *Spiritual Exercises*, there was no question yet of Enlightenment. The Renaissance, which saw our modern 'self' make its big breakthrough, prepared the arrival of the age of rationality, but did not have its superiority complex. It certainly did not yet underestimate human feelings and imagination as keys to the mystery of the human mind. Mistrust and even disdain towards those fundamental faculties which unite body and mind would only originate a century later with thinkers like Descartes, Pascal, Locke, Leibniz and even, though hesitantly, Kant. For Ignatius those faculties are still the very source of our experience and the material on which our thought is based. Therefore this religious predecessor of psychoanalysis helps us in his own way to understand better what is at stake in the Freudian approach to the human mind.

I now would like to illustrate this by comparing some essential aspects of both schools of feeling: the basic structure of the inner processes they describe, the tools they use to support that experience: firstly imagination, secondly transference and thirdly the choices which mark the end of both psychoanalysis and Loyola's *Exercises*.

As for the structure of these processes, Freud as well as Loyola see the adult in analysis or in prayer as a child who has not become a really adult being, and who should re-examine his or her life in function of that situation. 'From child to choice', could be the definition of each of the two inner adventures, the ability of making a real choice being the mark of an adult life. This structure is easily perceptible in the Freudian analysis. Here the patient is torn between aspirations and anxieties which, having their origin in the time a child is mainly with the mother, could be called 'motherly' – pleasure, security, intimacy – and those which appear when the father starts to play his role of 'other' in the life of the child, we could call 'fatherly' – share and care, justice, etc. [Of course these words, 'motherly' and 'fatherly', do not refer to persons but to functions. A father also shares in the function of the mother and vice-versa]. The 'I' in an analysis can be seen as the result of the dialectics between these two functions of our psyche, its egocentrism, heritage of 'the mother', and its need of 'otherness', heritage of 'the father' who has to show to his child the way out of the house, away from the mother. In an analysis we 'work ourselves again through' these old and often unresolved experiences, in order to acquire enough inner distance – one could perhaps call it 'post-oedipal' distance – to handle them with more freedom than before[2].

In the case of Ignatius the same structure is recognisable, in spite of the fact that here the moral problem which Freud strictly wants to avoid often tends to create a black and white scheme. In the eyes of Ignatius, the so called exercitant – the person engaged in these *Exercices* – is a 'child of God', but mainly a sinning child, someone who has to quit his or her former life. The initial scheme is the same as in Freud's analysis: from child to choice. Ignatius asks his exercitant to spend a whole week on this theme. Self-examination becomes an obsessive practice during these *Exercises*: a very systematic examination that mainly concerns our dark side , our sinful thoughts, sinful words, sinful deeds. In the centuries after Ignatius and through his influence, this practice will become omnipresent in the Roman Catholic world, and sexuality will increasingly tend to become one of the centres of this self-examination. Freud will not be the first to discover sexuality in the core of the human psyche... Be it what it be, our 'ego' does not get much positive appreciation in Ignatius' *Exercises*, with the exception of our will which is still able to turn the ship of life in another direction. But the 'motherly' side of existence remains in the dark until salvation appears, in the person of the idealised other, Jesus Christ, the one whom you can follow and imitate like a child imitates his father, and who takes you away from the dark motherly, egocentric, sinful side of existence. Ignatius asks his exercitant to spend

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2 The motherly side in our use of language is marked by the figure of proximity, the metonymy, whereas the 'fatherly' use, involving also the presence or the other, of difference, leads us to the metaphor. The language game of metonymy and metaphor results in the metamorphosis of the speaker, which is the objective of both prayer and analysis...

three weeks on this big example, the life of Christ. Thanks to that long process of identification with the words and the life of Christ the exercitant also becomes able to retrieve the now purified world of the mother. This process finds its conclusion in what is perhaps the most famous exercise of Ignatius, the 'contemplation to attain love', where the motherly world of the body, of creation, and the fatherly world of relating to the other meet and are reconciled. By that time the dependent child has made the choices of a responsible adult.

Once more, what is relevant is not content but form. The content of Freud's story and that of Ignatius share certain analogies, but remain for good reasons alien to each other. But the structure, the basic form of both psychoanalysis and the *Spiritual Exercises*, show the same psychic processes at work. That is also true when we have a closer look at the motor propelling them – human imagination – and at the other instruments that make it work, the final choices – the 'election' – and more in particular the transference[3]. Here the correspondences are the most intriguing and revealing. I do not have to insist on the importance of free association in psychoanalysis, nor on that of transference, which towards the end of his life Freud even considered as the main instrument for a successful analysis. The initial signs of both phenomena are also recognisable in the *Spiritual Exercises.* For Ignatius, each meditation on whatever subject, starts with what he calls a composition of the place in the imagination of the exercitant. Be it heaven or hell, Jerusalem or Bethlehem, but also the house where the exercitant himself lived as a child, committing his first sins, our fantasy is our main help in prayer and in decision making. 'It is profitable to use the imagination and to apply the five senses' (121): The body has to be involved in our prayers and our thinking: the gospel here becomes an inner theatre play, we hear Jesus speaking, we even smell and 'taste the infinite sweetness and charm of the Divinity', or touch and embrace the places where he walks. Roland Barthes once rightly remarked that Ignatius invites us as much to fill our minds with images as Zen-masters want to empty them. Ignatius still has a very strong sense of the bodily implications of everything we call spiritual. He does not yet speak, as Freud does, about 'imagining anything', which would be the key to free association, but he opens the doors to 'imagining everything', therapeutic imagination which is certainly the sign of an open mind. In the same spirit he requires a total openness of the exercitant versus his leader.

When he talks about 'perceiving and then understanding, a least to some extent, the various motions which are caused in the soul' (S.E. 313) we are indeed dealing with a kind of psychoanalysis *avant la lettre*, looking at our inner life with all the intensity and perspicacity we may possess. The most striking aspect of Ignatius' activity here is that he discovers how good and bad spirits are not as easy to discern as it may seem. Bad spirits often take the appearance of a good spirit and vice versa. You have to watch them with great alertness and see the results of their work. No doubt that this in the eyes of Ignatius most complicated and important phenomenon in our inner life refers to what Freud one day would also find the most important in his practice, terming it 'transference', which is the unconscious at work. Unconsciously, we are facing or addressing someone else than the person we think we are dealing with. Freud would interpret such a game of masks in a psychological way where Ignatius still sees good and bad angels at work. However, through all of this he realises that reason and intelligence are not what only, or what most matter to understand life. That insight will often be lost in the centuries of Enlightenment after him. Freud will try to retrieve it, though not without a certain ambiguity. He also wanted so dearly to belong to the world of science and reason which rejected him...

Not only therapeutic association and transference are at work in Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*. His role as a predecessor appears also when we look at the choices that mark the final stages of psychoanalysis and of Ignatius' *Exercises*. Freud's main remark about this issue is that strictly speaking, an analysis never ends, and new choices will have to be made. Ignatius shares that insight

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3 Transference is an inner mechanism in the patient by which he is able to transfer, mostly unconsciously, old, never resolved feelings, mainly concerning the relation to his parents in the past, to other people now, and during the analysis – hopefully – to the analyst. Recognition of this transference mechanisme in oneself is often the beginning of the end of an analysis.

and therefore invites his exercitant to go through the same experience every year. In psychoanalysis that would not be as easy. Therefore a central choice concerns the ending of the analysis and the timing of it, whereas Ignatius even establishes rules about the choice – 'the election' – of the future life of the exercitant. He marks 'three times suitable for making a sound and good election'. The first and best is evidence by 'intuition', the second clarity by feelings of consolation and desolation, only the third is the result of pure reasoning.

Both Ignatius and Freud give a place to fantasy, poetics and the irrational in their stories of inner experience. Comparing these two 'schools of feeling', many of us will be mainly sensitive to, or grateful for Freud's jump into modernity, for the way he unmasks theological or philosophical pretensions to possess or even govern a higher truth. Freud wants human reason and science to lead the way to the future. However, what Ignatius seems to realise more than Freud is that knowledge, inner light, cannot and should not be, or become only the light of reason. Our mind would be like a lamp without batteries. Human reason cannot pretend to dominate human life. There is something highly positive in not pretending that we can – or should – know everything.

The unknown – call it 'God', the unconscious, the nirvana or whatever – is not a realm, a reality which at the end could or should be translated into rational language. Knowledge cannot be exclusively reduced to reason. That is only true as long as we are investigating the material, 'scientific' world In the world of the mind, of the 'immaterial', we are dealing with a different 'unknown'. In the heart of it we find the mysteries of death and of creativity. That realm, which we carry inside our minds and bodies, is an open space, reaching beyond reason and theory, and even beyond imagination and myth. Therefore we invented a hidden God and the unconscious. Those concepts or, even more, those experiences will always be necessary to keep us going, to keep our minds free.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 225-229

Places of absence and loss: *Hiroshima mon amour* and *Lost in translation*

SOLANGE LEIBOVICI[*]

– You have seen *nothing* in Hiroshima. *Nothing.*
– I have seen *everything*. *Everything*. I have seen the hospital. I am sure I have.
– You have not seen the hospital in Hiroshima. You have seen nothing in Hiroshima (*Hiroshima mon amour*, Alain Resnais, 1959).
– You are really having a midlife crisis aren't you?
– Really? I was afraid of that. I kept telling myself that I just wanted to be ready in case we go to war tonight (*Lost in translation,* Sofia Coppola, 2003).

There are places, strange and mysterious, marked by loss and trauma, or shining bright in their neon colours, which seem to look back at us when we watch them, and confront us with what we are missing, what we have lost, something impossible to symbolize by means of language. Japan will be such a place in the two films I have chosen to discuss, the first in a dramatic, the second in an ironic mode: *Hiroshima mon amour* and *Lost in Translation.* I would like to examine how these places make it possible for us to relive or remember events that took place in our past, or are just happening at the very moment film characters are placed in surroundings not recognizable and even impossible to comprehend, when they find themselves near the danger of encountering their most hidden desire or their most unknown fear. In other words, how some places seem to return the gaze.

Why these two films? Maybe because they are *not* about Japan, at least it is a stereotyped Japan which is presented here, like the nineteenth century "Orient" Edward Saïd described in *Orientalism.* Perhaps you might say that in *Hiroshima mon amour,* Japan is presented as a place of loss, while in *Lost in Translation*, it is a place of absence. First I would like to define those two concepts, absence and loss, in their relation to history.

Dominic LaCapra points out a striking difference between absence and loss. According to him, absence is situated on a transhistorical level, while loss exists on a historical level. Absence is not an event and does not imply tenses (past, present or future), and by contrast, the historical past seems to be the scene of losses that may be narrated as well as specific possibilities that may conceivably be reactivated in the present or future. However when we speak of absence, the past is perceived in terms of sheer non-being or utter annihilation, though some part of it always remains, if only as a haunting presence or revenant, while losses are specific and involve particular events. Loss is often correlated

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with lack, for as loss is to the past, so lack is to the present and future. By contrast to absence, loss is situated on a historical level and is the consequence of particular events. Some losses may be traumatic while others are not, and there are variations in the intensity or devastating impact of trauma (LaCapra 2000).

If we follow LaCapra, contemporary thinking about trauma too often turns loss into absence, absolutizing a historic process and thus eliminating the possibility for change and recovery. Seeing historical trauma as loss will create more opportunities for "working through" rather than "acting out" the past. Absence and loss both are anxiety-generating, and both are related to desire. In loss, the object of desire is specified: to recover the lost or lacking object or some substitute for it. By contrast, the object of desire is not specified in relation to absence. I hope I will be able to show how this works in both films.

Hiroshima mon amour tells a very ordinary, you might even say banal love story, only it takes place in a city where it was at the time nearly impossible to imagine such a love story. Like Marguerite Dumas points out, "nothing is 'given' in Hiroshima. A particular halo seems to accompany each gesture, each spoken word, to add a new meaning to their litteral sense" (Duras 1980). Because Hiroshima took place, there can be no pretending or lying: all you can do is speak about the impossibility of Hiroshima. In the film, history is discrete, almost humble, and eventually disappears, but history is indeniably the cause and the background of the love between the French woman and the Japanese man. Julia Kristeva writes that although the French woman reminds us of a character of one of Stendhal's novels, and is in that sense eternal, she also exists because of the war, the nazis, the atomic bomb (Kristeva 1987, 242). But it is through the fictional story, not about Hiroshima but taking place at its site, that its historical specificity is conveyed. Cathy Caruth writes that "the possibility of knowing history is also raised as a deeply ethical dilemma: the unremitting problem of *how not to betray the past*" (Caruth 1996, 27).

Todd McGowan also stresses the historical dimension of *Hiroshima mon amour*. Because director Alain Resnais (and of course writer Marguerite Duras) denies the absolute otherness of historical objects, the film recounts the French woman's capacity for grasping trauma as such. The Japanese man's words "You have seen nothing in Hiroshima" speak to the impossibility of Hiroshima as a historical object, the woman however says she has seen everything. By doing this, the film shows the impossibility of the historical object and at the same time the possibility of experiencing the impossibility. The woman is not experiencing Hiroshima as an ordinary object, but as an impossible object. This is what Marguerite Duras means when she writes: "All we can do is speak about the impossibility of Hiroshima. Knowledge about Hiroshima is immediately presented as an illusion".

According to McGowan, we can only access the impossible historical object insofar as we pay attention to the transition from a world of desire to a world of fantasy. As we see the images of the devastation in *Hiroshima mon amour*, the woman admits that her experience of Hiroshima is one of an illusion. She compares the illusion that she has of Hiroshima to the illusion that one has in a love relationship. In both, we relate to the otherness of the other through the lens of fantasy. On the one hand, the fantasy shields us from the traumatic real of the other, but on the other hand, in the very act of shielding us from the real, the fantasy must acknowledge its existence. In *Hiroshima mon amour*, it is the film within the film that reveals the historical event of the destruction of the city and its inhabitants, and at the same time protects us from it, because it's a film, a fantasmatic scenario.

By speaking of Hiroshima and of her dead German lover, the woman for the first time tells about the trauma of lying on his dead body, of feeling him die under her own living body. The dead and the living seem to be united in an impossible, horrible love-making. The French town where she lived during the war, Nevers, becomes Hiroshima, and Hiroshima becomes Nevers. What she gives her Japanese lover is her most intimate secret: she shows she can accept him as a substitute for the other, but their brief love story has also enabled her to make peace with the fact that she has survived the traumatic loss of the German lover.

Refering to the beginning of the film and the dying bodies of the past in their confuse relationship to the living bodies of the two lovers in the present, Cathy Caruth asks: "What is the role

of our seeing in establishing a relation between these two sets of bodies?" (Caruth 1996, 26). It is true that the film is about seeing and not seeing, about having seen and not having seen. It is however possible to approach the problem of sight in another way. Early Lacanian film theory located the gaze in the spectator and analyzed cinema in terms of his gaze, and focused itself on the particularity of the viewer himself. We used to associate the gaze with an active process: in the Lacanian view the aim of the gaze is to trigger our desire visually, and as such it is what Lacan calls *objet petit a*: the object-cause of desire.

In a more Zizekian approach, the gaze expresses fundamental emptiness, it isolates a stain of the Real, a merciless and lethal position which is in the end our own[1]. So the gaze involves the spectator in the filmic image, disrupting his ability to remain what Christian Metz called "all-perceiving". The gaze is not the spectator's external view of the filmic image, but the mode in which the spectator is accounted for within the film itself. Like Todd McGowan writes, "the gaze is nothing but our presence in what we are looking at, but we are nothing but this gaze." The gaze is a blank point –a point that disrupts the flow and the sense of the experience- within the aesthetic structure of the film, and it is the point at which the spectator is obliquely included in the film. Slavoj Zizek writes that when looking at a film, we see two different realities: the "common sense" reality based on facts, while at the same time our gaze is disrupted and we become aware of a different reality, the anamorphotic, formless image confused by our desires and fears (Zizek 1991, 27).

Two scenes in both films should draw our attention: the scene in which the French actress plays in the documentary about Hiroshima, and the scene where aging actor Bob Harris, brilliantly played by Bill Murray, plays in a commercial promoting Japanese whisky. At his arrival in Tokyo, Bob is immediately confronted with a giant image of himself on a billboard. Later he will see himself as a young actor on television, and then again on a billboard in the streets of Tokyo. We see him also stare at himself in mirrors, in the elevator and in his bathroom. Mirror-images here are encounters with the emptiness on which the subject's own structure is based. Playing his role as the big American star in the commercial about *Suntory*, a Japanese whisky brand[2], Bob is confronted with the fact that language fails as a means of communication: the Japanese director's long sentences are reduced to very short statements by the translator. Bob is asked for intensity, but he can only pretend, the only intensity is that of the young people who surround him. He sees himself though their eyes, he looks in the camera and straight into the viewer's eyes. We look at him, and, in contrast with Japan's exuberant vitality, his eyes express only absence and emptiness. At that very moment we experience the traumatic impact of aging, of being in the wrong place, and even more, living in the wrong time.

In *Hiroshima mon amour*, the confrontation with the war takes place in the *mise-en-scène* of the peace demonstration organized for the film. We see large photos of wounded people, who look at us and seem to address us. The man and the woman are stuck in the middle of the crowd of running Japanese actors, but together they succeed in reaching the other side of the street. Not one moment they have looked at the photos, and they don't have to do so: the photos of the victims, images of quiet despair that make the terrible event come closer to us, are presented to us, viewers, not to the two lovers.

While *Hiroshima mon amour* is about loss and the possibility of working out, *Lost in Translation* shows us someone who acts out in regression. Marvin Krims wrote a beautiful article about this condition in *King Lear*: Lear's emotional problem, his difficulties in knowing himself and his narcissistic demand to be unconditionally loved, prevent him from being able to grieve his losses due

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1 The Zizekian Real does not correspond exactly with the Lacanian Real: the Lacanian Real is what is outside language and inassimilable to symbolisation. It is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the symbolic order and impossible to attain in any way. Same for Zizek, only he stresses the traumatic and excessive character of the Real, that cannot be integrated and experienced as something existing, but only as the Thing.

2 Maybe the only reference to time: Suntory sounds like century, and the car in which Bob rides around is a Toyota Century.

to aging, and instead he regresses. “This regression manifests itself in the infantile wishes that underlie his construction of the ‘love test’” (Krims 2007, 75). This is what happens to Bill Murray’s character in *Lost in Translation.* To escape his fear of aging, he falls in love with a young girl and follows her to bars and parties. There is a very intimate scene between both, when they lie in bed and talk, and Bob touches her foot. And then they finally fall asleep. There can be no love story, the “love test” has failed.

Hiroshima tells us about trauma and loss, *Translation* is about depression and what is called an “empty” mood. Bob Harris suffers from insomnia, loss of interest and pleasure, absence of vitality. Jetlag makes time vanish, day and night turn into one long boring sameness. *Hiroshima* is historically layered because of the flash-backs, the story takes place in the present but there is an intrinsical need to go back to the past. *Translation* has only one level, that of the present, symbolized by the vibrant, exuberant urban nightlife. Hiroshima was a place of trauma and devastation, a historical scar, Tokyo is hyperreality and the coolest place on earth. Changes in history take only place in the space between the two films, in an unmentioned past that functions as a kind of transitional time-space.

There is one very important line in *Translation*. When Charlotte’s husband tells her she should quit smoking, she answers: “I’ll stop later”. For her there is time, there is future. Bob doesn’t have to quit smoking cigars: for him, it’s too late. His future is reduced to the moment. Still, at the end of the film he seems to have realized that aging is not only a depressive absence. Living is learning to mourn and accept the loss. He begins to understand that his own youth is the object of his desire, not Charlotte, and that there might be a way of turning absence into loss. But this is of course my own interpretation.

The two scenes I chose are what Norman Holland calls *metafilms*, stories in which “the physical medium of the story becomes part of the story”, like the movie-within-the-movie in Woody Allen’s *Purple Rose of Cairo*. Norman points out that metafilms can make us tense, edgy, a little nervous, a little dizzy, in other words, we get that strange feeling Freud called the *uncanny*. For Freud, the uncanny took place with the return of repressed fantasies, that would evoke the same anxiety that led to their repression in the first place. But Norman gives another answer, which is neuropsychological and particularly striking in the case of film. I will not get into details, you can find them in Norm’s article in *Projections. The Journal for Movies and Mind.* The metafilmic effect rests on a childish belief that the story we see might be real. First the events pictured on the screen were fictional, but we believed in those events (or rather, we suspended our disbelief). But then the brain gets two inconsistent signals. The physical reality of the movie being written in the story makes us realize that our belief in the movie was mistaken. We suddenly feel a contradiction in our perception. The filmmaker’s mingling reality with unreality is what creates the anxious feeling Freud called the uncanny. Alain Resnais used this by showing the wounded people of Hiroshima in a faked documentary, Sofia Coppola plays with it when she confronts Bob Harris with his younger self in an episode of *Saturday Night Life* in 1975.

Maybe this is what Zizek calls “the encounter with the gaze”. While invested in the film, the subject is able to encounter the gaze as a disruption within spectatorship. We have to immerse ourselves in cinematic fascination and focus on the points of rupture where the gaze emerges. These are the points where film disturbs the spectator, in the same way as in dreams, when the uncanny makes its apparition. In dreams we do not approach things, things show themselves to us. The metafilm creates a filmic possibility to disrupt the gaze and organizes a traumatic encounter with the Real.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 231-234

West Texas wind, Dorothy Scarborough's *The Wind* and madness

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"You must go through at least a year of it to have some notion".
Ken Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion*[1]

I grew up in Dallas during a period in which we never experienced a dust storm. There blue northers (sudden strong winds from the north accompanied by radical drops in temperature) were not threats but harbingers of gingerbread and cocoa (with marshmallows) in front of the fireplace. Only later, when I lived for two years in Las Cruces, New Mexico, did I learn about dust storms that pitted or completely removed paint from cars and first frazzled your nerves, then gradually drove you crazy. Consequently I recognized the emotional truths that are demonstrated in Dorothy Scarborough's novel *The Wind*[2] and the 1927 silent film based on the novel (directed by Victor Seastrom and starring Lillian Gish).

Hurricanes have frequently been used in fiction and film to emphasize plots in which innocent people fall victim to the violence of criminals or psychotics, for example in *Key Largo*, *Cape Fear*, and *The Mean Season*. In contrast, powerful winds, such as the mistrals of Provence, France; the soroccos of northern Africa; and the mariahs of Montana and the western United States[3] are often associated with mental turmoil or even madness.

The dust storms and blue northers of West Texas, according to Barbara Quissell, "are comparable to the mistral of southern France and the sirocco of northern Africa, other violent winds which are said to drive individuals to extreme and uncharacteristic actions"[4]. As Joe R. Eagleman[5] points out, "continued drought can change the landscape... The dust storms of the l930s covered fences with mounds of dust; a dust storm 500 km in diameter can carry 100 million tons of dust."

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1 What is said about the fictional Wakonda, Oregon is equally true of West Texas, especially in the era when it was being settled by pioneers and cattlemen who lived in isolation, separated from their nearest neighbor by many miles.

2 Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1925. Rpt. 1979.

3 These winds are the subject of the song "They Call the Wind Mariah" from *Paint Your Wagon.*

4 "Dorothy Scarborough's Critique of the Frontier Experience in *The Wind*," *Women, Women Writers, and* The Wind, (Troy, NY: Whitson, 1979), 179-180.

5 *Severe and Unusual Weather*, 2nd ed. (Lenexa, KS: Trimedia Publishing Co., 1990).

Likewise, "[a] norther may reach a speed of 40 knots, and... often produces clouds of dust"[6]. Although in this century the dust storms that produced the dust bowl and contributed to the Great Depression are well known, the winds and dust storms of the West Texas drought of l885-86 – the period in which *The Wind* was set – were far more severe. Scarborough's representations of the wind in her novel are not exaggerated. As Carole Slade points out, "Numerous types of destructive winds, including cyclones, tornadoes, and northers... did continually threaten the lives and property of pioneers on unprotected Texas ranges" (86). Eagleman explains that in an "intense longwave cyclone... strong winds [can] pick up considerable dust from the dry soil in eastern Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas" (34) and can create extreme-nightlike-darkness (35).

Similarly extreme are the blue northers of Texas, which, according to Bresenham and Puentes, sometimes bring in "enough cold air to drop the temperature from 90º to 30º in less than an hour"[7]. These northers get their name not only from their temperature but also because of "the dark blue haze [that is] created by the advancing cold current against the warmer southern wind" *Texas Almanac: 1958-1959,* 163*)*. The storm can be darker still if it has picked up dust. In Scarborough's novel, Letty describes one blue norther that begins as "a puny, cloud, slight and fragile, touching the prairie's rim" but which "grew and darkened. Swiftly it spread over the sky until it blotted out the blue, till it hung, a black pall, over the wide heavens. It happened so quickly... that Letty could scarcely believe it" (171). She describes "the icy chill of a sudden (171) drop in temperature" and explains that "night was on them almost immediately, for the clouds had blotted out the daylight, wiping out even the [usual] brief wintry dusk" (172).

Scarborough's novel shows the effect that the hardships of pioneer homesteading had on women, most of whom came from places whose landscape and weather were benign or even luxurious. Scarborough's novel demonstrates the erosion that the combination of wind and isolation can cause to a person's sanity. In the course of the novel, Letty is orphaned at eighteen with no relatives to take care of her in her native Virginia. She is persuaded by her pastor to travel to Sweetwater, Texas to live with her cousin, who is a rancher there. As the train carries her westward, she becomes more and more depressed by the landscape – by its desiccation, by its emptiness, by the skeletons of dead cattle she sees along the way, and most of all, by its fierce winds. The wind drives her first to marry a man she cannot love; second, to have an affair with a man she cannot trust; third, to murder him with a typical West Texas weapon – a rifle; fourth, to bury him only to have his body gradually unearthed by the wind; and finally, to go completely mad and rush out across the prairie in a windstorm to her death.

Of the very few critics who have discussed *The Wind*, two utilize feminist viewpoints. Barbara Quissel presents a brief biography of Scarborough, focuses on the realism and historical accuracy of the novel's presentation of the Western pioneer experience, and argues that the "feminist viewpoint [of the novel] is a secondary theme" (187). She compares the novel with the 1927 Victor Seastrom silent film, and considers the significance of the fact that the point of view is that of "the interior mind" (191). Carol Slade argues that the wind in the novel represents a patriarchal society; she interprets the powerful and pervasive wind as a symbol of "the masculine force... [that] can incapacitate a woman for authorship" (Slade 86)[8].

Certainly Scarborough distinguishes between men's and women's ability to deal with the wind: Gram'ma Powers explains to Letty that the wind is "the hardest thing a woman is up against on the plains. Men don't know what it means to us. Their nerves ain't like ourn" (194). In Scarborough's introduction to the novel she says, "The winds were cruel to women that came under their tyranny. They were at them ceaselessly, buffeting them with icy blasts in winter, parching their skins and roughening their hair, and trying to wear down their nerves by attrition, and drive them away" (3).

As an extremely sensitive eighteen-year-old, Letty is vulnerable to suggestions and predisposed to internalize what Roddy, the stranger she meets on the train to Sweetwater, tells her. He states that

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6 *Encyclopedia Americana*.

7 Karolyn Patterson Bresenham and Nancy O'Bryant Puentes. *Texas Stars: A Legend of Texas Quilts, 1936-1986.* Vol. I. (Austin, Texas: U Texas Press, 1986), 70.

8 "Authorship and Authority in Dorothy Scarborough's *The Wind*," *Studies in American Fiction* 14 (1986).

"the wind is the worse thing," and that "it's ruination to a woman's looks and nerves pretty often. It dries up her skin till it gets brown and tough as leather. It near 'bout puts her eyes out with the sand it blows in 'em all day. It gets on her nerves with its constant blowing – makes her irritable and jumpy" (21). (I might have thought this description excessive had I not experienced West Texas dust storms.) He tells her how dangerous tornadoes are. Roddy also plants the idea that will encompass Letty: that the wind is "a devil" (24). She immediately assimilates these ideas, conceiving of the wind as "a terror that might pass by day or night, to leave death and devastation in its path! It the day, when you could see its frightfulness – or in the night when you could only hear it roaring, and imagine!" (26). When she detrains in Sweetwater she feels that "the wind swooped at her like a mad malevolence" (37) and admits that "the wind got on my nerves" (44). Instead of recognizing the beauty in seeing "incredible distances in all directions(?)," she "feels queer to be out in the open with so much space about" (53). She is also susceptible to Lige Hightower''s assertion that "I reckon there are folks that'd go loco for lonesomeness" (54).

Letty becomes obsessed with what she considers the "demonic wind" (105), a wind that "roared like a thousand demons let loose from the pit" (172). She personifies it as "a demon steed, racing like a black shadow across the plain, a lonely, terrible figure, neighing in the night" (155), and believes it is determined to destroy her. She intensifies her fear by incanting again and again a song she had learned in Virginia: "Lord, I don't want to die in a storm" (156). She begins to think in the kind of teleological causality that schizophrenics use, i.e., they believe that "every act, every event occurs because it is willed or wanted either by [a] person... or by something that has become personified" (Atieti, 241) – in Letty's case, the wind. Arieti even states "If a storm occurs, if the wind blows it is *solely* because someone wants it to" (242, italics Arieti's).

Letty not only blames all her suffering on the malevolent wind, but develops irrational beliefs about it that gradually become obsessive hallucinations. She believes:

> the wind was a demon that had driven them all crazy; that had put false thoughts in Cora's [her cousin's wife, who hated Letty] mind, making her stir up... trouble... The wind was determined to destroy her, because she feared it so! It was after her, and she couldn't escape it!
>
> She saw the wind as a black stallion with mane a-stream, and hoofs of fire, speeding across the trackless plains, deathless, defiant!... A phantom, riderless horse, whom no mortal would ever ride – that no lariat flung by human hands could capture! His proud neck arching, his eyes glancing flames, he raced toward her across the sand – supernatural, satanic, the wind of the North! (175).

At a later point in the novel she describes the wind differently, as "whirling curtains of dust, veils that writhed and twisted, hung like cloth of gold from the heavens, as high as she could see. The wind was no longer naked and invisible. It had clothed itself with those swirling veils that revealed its obscene antics, its horrific gestures. It was a thing unbearable to *see* the wind!" (197, italics Scarborough's). Letty believes that "no human being, no wild beast even, could be so tricky and so crafty and so cruel as the wind and the sand" (198), and that "it [would] laugh and shriek at you" 199). She believes that she has angered the wind because she can read the its mind (334), and that "the wind knew what... [her] thoughts were" (335).

Letty demonstrates a major symptom of schizophrenia, adualism, which Arieti defines as "[the] lack of the ability to distinguish between the two realities, that of the mind and that of the external world" (Arieti, 278). The fact that she says that she "held long dialogues with persons imagined or actual" (208), and that she imagines mirages of "green trees and still lakes" (260) shows that she can no longer distinguish between a hallucination and the real, a major symptom of schizophrenia, according to Arieti. She also demonstrates another symptom of schizophrenia, "an increased acuity of perception" (Arieti, 279), as she becomes "acutely aware of all that went on around her" (Scarborough, 261). Her observations match Arieti's analysis, that "in many... cases of acute schizophrenia the patient experiences an increased acuity of perception" (279).

Additionally, Letty experiences another basic symptom of schizophrenia, a sense of separation and alienation from his or her own body. Emotionally healthy persons usually feel their bodies to be "alive, real, and substantial." and feel themselves to be "alive, real, and substantial" (Laing, 68)[9]. They perceive themselves as "embodied" (Laing 68). In contrast, schizophrenics experience themselves as "unembodied" (Laing, 68). Unlike "those 'ordinary' people who feel in moments of stress partially dissociated from their bodies," they "go through life... detached from their bodies" (Laing, 68). To them, "the body is felt more as one object among other objects in the world" or as "a false self which a detached, disembodied, 'inner,' 'true' self looks on... with tenderness, amusement, or hatred." Letty experiences "a queer remoteness from reality, as if only her body were there, and she herself were far away" (181). She also exhibits symptoms of bipolar illness in that she alternatively experiences "despondency so profound that it seemed she could never climb up to spiritual peace" and moments of "unreasonable exhilaration" in which her "spirit would walk on rainbow clouds, [and] her whole body would tingle with joy". She admits that her alternations of emotion frightened her (270).

At the novel's climax and conclusion, after she has murdered Wirt Roddy and unsuccessfully buried him because the wind blew away the sand that covered his body, "with a laugh that strangled on a scream, the woman sped to the door, flung it open and rushed out. She fled across the prairies like a leaf blown in a gale, borne along in the force of the wind that was at last to have its way with her" (337). At this point, having allowed herself to be driven completely mad by the wind, Letty goes out into the storm and to her death.

Certainly the living conditions, deprivations, and hardships that Scarborough describes throughout her novel were no exaggeration. Bresenham explains that "farms and ranches were... sometimes more than a day's rid from civilization" (*1836-1936*, 19), and "their lives were... reduced to the bare essentials of their environment – the rattlesnake, the Texas sun, the windmill, the log cabin, the schoolhouse" (*1836-1936*, 17). Likewise, the women who lived "in the Panhandle or the plains, ... watched the Dust Bowl [of the 1930s] blow away the hopes and dreams that lay in the topsoil the wind swept away into black clouds as high as mountains" (*1936-1986*, 11), just as it had during previous droughts. A pioneer woman had to try to make a home, as did Letty, in a log cabin that was "just a box-house... [s]et up in makeshift fashion with a rock at each corner, and an occasional one along the walls," in a yard with "no flowers, no grass" (182), and whose interior walls were papered with newspapers (190).

It is hardly surprising that such living conditions and climate drove some women mad.

9 *R. D. Laing. The Divided* Self (London: Penguin, 1965).

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 235-238

In search of lost quietude: On Pessoa

*FRANCISCO OLIVEIRA**

Installed on the upper floors of certain respectable taverns in Lisbon can be found a small number of restaurants or eating places, which have the stolid, homely look of those restaurants you see in towns that lack even a train station. Amongst the clientele of such places, which are rarely busy except on Sundays, one is as likely to encounter the eccentric as the nondescript, to find people who are but a series of parentheses in the book of life.

There was a period in my life when a combination of economic necessity and a desire for peace and quiet led me to frequent just such a restaurant. I would dine at around seven each night and, as chance would have it, I was almost always there at the same time as one particular man. At first I took little notice of him but as time passed he came to interest me.

He was a man in his thirties, thin, fairly tall, very hunched when sitting though less so when standing, and dressed with a not entirely unselfconscious negligence. Not even the suffering apparent in his pale, unremarkable features added any interest to them nor was it easy to pinpoint the origin of that suffering. It could have been any number of things: hardship, grief or simply the suffering born of the indifference that comes from having suffered too much.

He always ate sparingly and afterwards would smoke a cigarette rolled from cheap tobacco. He would watch the other costumers, not suspiciously, but as if genuinely interested in them. He did not scrutinize them as though wanting to fix their faces or any outward evidence of their personalities in his memory, rather he was simply intrigued by them. And it was this odd trait of his that first aroused my curiosity.

I began to observe him more closely. I noticed that a certain hesitant intelligence illuminated his features, but his face was so often clouded by exhaustion, by the inertia of cold fear, that I was usually hard to see beyond this.

I learned from a waiter at the restaurant that he worked as a clerk in a company that had its office nearby.

One day there was a scuffle in the street immediately outside the restaurant – a fight between two men. The customers all rushed to the windows, as did I and the man I've been describing. I made some banal comment to him and he replied in kind. His voice was dull and tremulous, the voice of one who hopes for nothing because all hope is vain. But perhaps it was foolish of me to attribute so much to my evening companion at the restaurant.

I don't quite know why but after that we always used to greet each other. And then one day, prompted perhaps by the foolish coincidence of us both turning up for supper later than usual, at half

* Lisbon, Portugal.

past nine, we struck up a casual conversation. At one point he asked me if I was a writer. I said I was. I mentioned the magazine Orpheu, which had recently come out. To my surprise he praised it, indeed praised it highly. When I voiced my surprise, saying that the art of those who wrote for Orpheu tended to appeal only to a small minority, he replied that maybe he was one of that minority. Anyway, he added, he was not entirely unfamiliar with that art for, he remarked timidly, since he had nowhere to go and nothing to do, no friends to visit and no interest in reading books, after supper he usually returned to his rented room and passed the night writing.

This is the way Fernando Pessoa, himself, introduces Bernardo Soares, his invention and *The Book of Disquiet*'s author.

If we weren't talking about Pessoa, we might think we were in the presence of one more literary expression of an organic tendency to depersonalization and simulation, as he says about the origin of his main heteronyms – *whatever the case, the mental origin of my heteronyms lies in my relentless, organic tendency to depersonalization and simulation*. Firstly, because everybody knows that Soares fulfills Pessoa's urge to be with himself, that's why he observes himself from outside, why he makes an auto-observation. In other words: Soares and Pessoa, the one, in search of some quietude: *There was a period in my life when a combination of economic necessity and a desire for peace and quiet led me to frequent just such a restaurant.* Secondly, because we can discern there almost everything which generally refers to dissociative identity disorder: the retreat regarding his own feelings, acts and thoughts; the careful way he describes them; the same thing regarding his own body; the imagined chats; without forgetting the constant depression, the emotional disorders, the distressing suffering and emptiness. In short, the feeling of incompleteness we immediately feel from the presentation which Pessoa makes of Soares and which Soares himself exhibits throughout his own book.

Once we begin to talk about Pessoa, everything becomes more complex. As we can read, Bernardo Soares is made to be the solution to a disorder with much more important proportions, a kind of artificial refuge against a structural disorder which makes such depersonalization look almost insignificant. It is known that Pessoa was "victim" of a fertile and cruel imagination from his childhood, when the first heteronyms did appear, as we can read from his letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro in 1935: *Ever since I was a child, it has been my tendency to create around me a fictitious world, to surround myself with friends and acquaintances that never existed. (...) Ever since I've known myself as "me", I can remember envisioning the shape, motions, character and life story of various unreal figures who were as visible and as close to me as the manifestations of what we call, perhaps too hastily, real life.* A certain Chevalier de Pas, a captain Thibeaut and then Alexander Search, most likely a way to compensate for the emptiness left by the death of his father, are just some examples of little Pessoa's effervescent imagination. The same imagination which keeps a very special relationship with his mother, pushed to leave the country to be at the side of her new husband in a diplomatic mission in South Africa and from whom Pessoa, already a young adult, will be separated as he returns to Lisbon. Then he just has to follow that tendency, giving free rein to it and live up to its name: Pessoa, person, persona and which etymologically means mask, the mask through which we hide and reveal who we really are. From one of his poems written in English, a language in which he was fluent having studied in Durban where he won his first prize – creative writing –, he didn't do anything else but to break himself into different faces through which he inevitably runs: *How many masks wear we, and undermasks/ Upon our contenance of soul, and when,/ If for self sport the soul itself unmasks/ Knows it the last mark off and the face plain?*

The heteronyms and semi heteronyms of Pessoa are multiples. It's very possible that some of them still remain unknown inside the famous safe which still keeps several *pessoanos* busy. Pessoa, who sometimes feels himself to be nothing, at other times says he feels to be shelter to all the dreams in the world: *I'm nothing./ I shall always be nothing./ I can only be* nothing./ *Apart from this, I have in me all the dreams in the world.* However, there are three heteronyms which stand out: for the importance of their literary production, for their consistence and, most of all, for their psychological density. I mean Ricardo Reis, Alberto Caeiro and Álvaro de Campos, author of *Tobacconist's* and where we can read the verses above.

Regarding Ricardo Reis's birthday, Pessoa talks about different dates. The first version says that Dr. Ricardo Reis came upon his soul January 29th, 1914. Later, in the very same letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro, he changes his mind and says that Ricardo Reis did appear to him in 1912. The confusion about his birthplace is the same: firstly Lisbon, then Porto. About the rest there's no doubt: we are in the presence of his first important heteronym, even if not the first one entering upon a literary activity which was intensive and coherent till December 13th 1933 – the year of the death of Ricardo Reis. Doctor by profession, monarchical, the reason he emigrated to Brazil, he got his formation from the Jesuits. He's expert on classical authors and Latin poets old style, the style he uses in his own poetic creation. He preconizes a simple conception of life, accepting serenely the relativity of everything. This is the closest heteronym to its creator: physically – tawny, middle-sized, bent way of walking, thin and looking like a Portuguese Jew (Pessoa had Jewish antecedents) –, as well as his way of being and thinking. He's a sensationalism supporter, something he takes from Caeiro, and he's inspired by Stoicism and Epicureanism which influence the way he conceives the world.

Alberto Caeiro, the master, around whom all other heteronyms evolve, was born in April 1889 in Lisbon, although he spent a great part of his life on a farm in Ribatejo where he would meet Álvaro de Campos for the first time. He talks about himself as someone simple and natural, befitting someone with no more than a primary school education. He's blond, blue-eyed and a little shorter than Ricardo Reis. He's fragile, even if he doesn't look it, and dies young in 1915, victim of tuberculosis. Compared to all the others, the master's biography took the least amount of time from Pessoa. As Ricardo Reis did say, the master's life was his poems. Anyway, we know that he did appear in Pessoa's life on March 8, 1914, apparently in a spontaneous way, in the same epoch when he was strongly trying to run from subjectivism and mysticism. That's the source of Alberto Caeiro's simplicity and also explains his mocking attitude toward all occultisms, the reason why he fights the transcendence, the same reason why he becomes pagan and materialist and does not loose much time on philosophical issues.

Álvaro de Campos was born in 1890 in Tavira, a southern Portuguese town. Professionally, he is an engineer. He studied in Glasgow, Scotland, and graduated in naval technology. Visiting the Orient, he writes *Opiário*, the poem he dedicated to Mário de Sá-Carneiro, on the Suez Channel crossing. Disappointed with the visit, he comes back to Portugal where he will meet the master Caeiro, becoming his disciple. Meanwhile, he follows the modernist tendencies, such as futurism, but keeps his distance from sensationism. Just as he keeps his distance from master's objectivism, preferring to organize the sensations around the subject. This is why he becomes a subjectivist and also explains his consciousness of the absurd, his experience of boredom and his disillusion. His first composition dates from 1914 and he continued writing poetry, at least, till October 12, 1935, just before Fernando Pessoa died.

It seems, therefore, we have no choice but to rethink our original hypothesis with which we began our paper and to look beyond the simple expression of an apparent depersonalization. Instead, if we want to keep thinking about this case as a dissociative identity disorder, we must approach it from the perspective of a deeper multiple personality disorder. As in all such cases, we can distinguish different personalities coming from the same person, each with its own behavior and feelings. Even so, we are in the presence of a very particular and interesting case: aside from the fact that we cannot say exactly how many personalities we are talking about, they are not foreign to each other. They know about the others, they get in touch and develop personal relationships. As we can read in their biographies, they cross each other – Campos becomes a disciple of Caeiro – they quote each other and don't hesitate making comments about the others, something that usually doesn't happen in the typical cases of splitting the ego. Should we talk about a controlled disorder? One more case of artistic sublimation? Even if more complex? One more opportunity to evaluate the art as a therapeutic exercise? Regarding this, Bernardo Soares is the first to say that life would be nothing without the meaning given by art. Another opportunity to think of the analysis itself as an artistic exercise? Are we in the presence of a structural dissociation on the relation with The Other, as Lacan would say, or are we talking about psychosis as Freud would see it? Here there are some possible issues.

The issue about the existence of a primary identity, because there always is one, is yet another reason to keep thinking about Pessoa's case as a very special one. If we insist on distinguishing Pessoa and Soares – actually the same person searching for the same quietude –, we must think about three primary identities instead of just one as usually happens. Caeiro, the master, a heteronym regarding whom the others develop their own identities. Soares, who claims to know all the others very well. And Pessoa, for sure, ortonym, who delegates that function to the author of *The Book of Disquiet*. A book written by a man obviously subjected to depressions, invaded by tedium and anguish from the burden of living. A man who's pushed by all those circumstances to introspection with no bounds, a kind of self-analysis that reveals the exciting spiritual life of a modest employee: *I envy –though I'm not sure if envy is the right word – those people about whom one could write a biography, or who could write their autobiography. Through these deliberately unconnected impressions I am the indifferent narrator of my autobiography without events, of my history without a life. These are my Confessions and if I say nothing in them it's because I have nothing to say.*

The book itself is a book definitively absent, with no center, written at the mercy of chance, with no organic plans, full of intimate and tortuous impressions. A book where form and substance become necessarily one. As Breton will say about his *Nadja*: *un livre qu'on laisse battant comme des portes, et duquel on n'a pas à chercher la clef*. A book where the disquiet and Pessoa's inaptitude to connect to himself and to the world, and nothing else but it, assume total importance. According to some critics, this does not mean that it must be read as a symptom of blind dispersion or of any other mental disease. But rather as a superior state of mind that entitles the writer to overfly and to embrace several contradictory meanings which are, after all, the different faces of reality.

I confess that I don't know which superior state of mind some readers talk about. Probably they want to refer to the mysticism and esotericism which also did draw Pessoa's attention. If it is the case, we have one more reason to validate the hypothesis of a splitting of the ego, even if more complex. It's known that studying visionaries and mystics was essential for experts to arrive at an understanding of the different kinds of personality changes. But it is also possible that these literary critics are unaware that they are accepting Lacan's proposal, which sees behind the dissociation between the imaginary ego and the unconsciousness a more fundamental division. One a structural dissociation, one an imposing refracture on the unconsciousness itself. In any case, as Soares said about himself, one life which observes its own slow wreck : *I've witnessed, incognito, the gradual collapse of my life, the slow foundering of all that I wanted to be.* The life of someone who decides to exploit and live from the other's dreams: *Ce qui se passe, en fait, c'est que je fais des autres mon propre rêve, me pliant à leurs opinions pour en pénétrer mon esprit et mon intuition, pour les faires miennes, et pour les plier à mon gout et faire ainsi, de leur personnalité, des choses apparentées à mes rêves.* A life spent hanging between depressions and troubles, that's what Soares exhibits as one exhibits a disease, which could be explained by several reasons: the death of his father when he was a child, the distance between himself and his mother, the almost inexistent affective life and the alcohol he drank excessively his entire life. In short, the black virgin[1].

[1] *O Virgem Negra*, the black virgin, is the title chosen by Mário de Cesariny, the most important Portuguese surrealist, for the book where he ironically tries to explain Pessoa to children. We suspect that this title came up when Pessoa's remains were transferred from the original cemetery to Mosteiro dos Jerónimos, to be side-by-side with Camões – and it was discovered that his cadaver was intact and blackened. A life drowned by alcohol? Perhaps.

Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 239-242

Norman Holland's importance to me

JEFFREY BERMAN[*]

For the past forty years Norman Holland has been the "Dean" of American psychoanalytic literary critics. He was one of the first proponents of reader response criticism, the theorist of reader's identity themes, and the author of a baker's dozen of books that have become classics in the field, including The Dynamics of Literary Response, Five Readers Reading, and Holland's Guide to Psychoanalytic Psychology and Literature-and-Psychology. In addition, he is the creator and moderator of PSYART, the online Literature and Psychology listserv that has over one thousand subscribers, and the guiding force behind the annual International Conference on Literature and Psychology, in which we are all happily participating. More than anyone in the country, indeed the world, he has insisted that if psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic literary criticism are to survive, they must be based on "good" science rather than on speculation.

I never had the pleasure of taking a course with Norm when I was an undergraduate at SUNY-Buffalo in the early 1960s, but I found myself drawn irresistibly to his writings when I was in graduate school and began experimenting with psychoanalytic criticism. His groundbreaking work on reader-response criticism and identity theory awakened my own interest. His commitment to psychoanalytic pedagogy inspired me thirty years ago to ask my students to write a weekly Freudian diary. He has been a role model for me both professionally and personally.

I have learned so much from Norm's books. To begin with, I learned that studying psychoanalysis is a lifelong passion, one that requires not simply an understanding of Freud's writings but also an awareness of the historical evolution of psychoanalytic theory. Norm has insisted that as important as a reading knowledge of psychoanalysis is, it is not enough. One must explore one's own unconscious processes and, if one has the time and money, to undergo a personal analysis. He has also encouraged us to be aware of developments in related fields, such as clinical psychology, biology, and now neuropsychology, all of which he has eagerly and systematically studied. Though trained as a New Critic, he was one of the first truly interdisciplinary literary critics. As he writes in Holland's Guide, "in my experience, the more you study psychoanalysis per se, especially clinical psychoanalysis, the better psychoanalytic criticism you will write. It is a mistake to read only psychoanalytic literary criticism and then try to practice it" (3).

Reading Norm's books, I have learned to value clarity. His conversational prose style makes him accessible to scholars and nonscholars alike. He writes with wit, verve, and urbane intelligence. He often writes about polymaths, but he is one himself: his interdisciplinary knowledge is extraordinary, but he is never showy. Long opposed to "lit-crit" jargon, he writes with a transparency that is never condescending or reductive. He uses his knowledge not to demolish opponents but to show them how

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conflicting theories can be synthesized. His own theories are controversial, and he has long been a lightning rod for the opponents of psychoanalysis, yet he remains a model of scholarly grace in his argumentation. He always speaks respectfully of his opponents, and he goes out of his way to credit those from whom he has learned. I have never encountered a more generous scholar.

No less than Freud, Norm's work has evolved over time, and he has had the courage and flexibility to modify his beliefs. His 1968 book The Dynamics of Literary Response developed a model of literature based on ego psychology, the study of psychological defenses. This was a convincing literary model, but it revealed little about the author's or reader's relationship to the text. Norm then became interested in identity theory, basing his research on the work of psychoanalyst Heinz Lichtenstein. In his now-famous Delphi Seminars with Murray Schwartz at the Center for the Psychological Study of the Arts at SUNY Buffalo in the 1970s, Norm developed the first psychoanalytic pedagogy. Their new book, Know Thyself, recently published by the PsyArt Foundation that they both helped to found, explores the dynamics of transactive reading. One of Norm's most important ideas, first introduced in the Delphi Seminars and then worked out in painstaking and persuasive detail in his influential 1975 book Five Readers Reading, is the concept of the reader's identity theme, which has become the cornerstone of reader-response criticism. He demonstrates how our identity theme is influenced by our characteristic defenses, fantasies, and transformations. He argues that the reader's identity theme is relatively continuous and stable but capable of change over time, like a variation on a theme. The fact that "we perceive the world in the terms of our own subjectivities has a positive, freeing side," he observes in Five Readers Reading. "It is only by being different from one another that we can have the experience of sharing" (231).

Norm's interest in reader identity themes compelled him to write his 1995 novel Death in a Delphi Seminar. The book has not received the critical and popular attention it deserves. It is a fascinating murder mystery set in the mid 1980s at SUNY-Buffalo. The story is so lifelike that some readers may believe that he is actually describing a murder in one of his own psychoanalytic literary seminars. As the novel opens, we learn that a female student in Holland's graduate seminar has been poisoned, presumably by another member of the class. The narrative arises out of the conflicting texts surrounding Patricia Hassler's death: transcripts of police interviews, student essays, department memos, newspaper accounts, the professor's private journal, and the inner musings of Lieutenant Norman "Justin" Rhodes, who is in charge of solving the murder. All eight members of the Delphi seminar are suspects – the seven students plus an untenured assistant professor who is sitting in on the course to learn more about Holland's psychoanalytic approach to literature. Holland himself is a suspect, for he has, along with the others, the motive, means, and opportunity to do away with the obnoxious Hassler, whose strident views alienate everyone in the seminar. Before her murder is solved, a second corpse appears, that of an ominous interloper who has been secretly disrupting the seminar by writing hate letters to the other students. Lieutenant Rhodes's task is to solve these two perplexing crimes. He succeeds, largely by enlisting the help of Holland's controversial theory of reading.

Death in a Delphi Seminar may be considered a "theoretical thriller" in that it dramatizes the challenges to traditional humanistic scholarship posed in different ways by Holland, the deconstructive philosopher Jacques Derrida, and the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Although the fierce theoretical disputes of the academy may not be of much interest to those outside its ivy towers – the reason academic politics is so vicious, Henry Kissenger, a former academic, has famously observed, is because nothing is at stake – Holland's story reveals that these battles have far-reaching consequences.

I was never a member of the Delphi Seminar, but it appears that the novel accurately conveys its formal structure. In the first half of the seminar, students write about their free associations to various poems and stories. These free associations, which the students then circulate to their classmates, resemble those of a patient in psychoanalysis. In the second half of the seminar, the students analyze their own reading styles, and in doing so, they are arriving at their identity themes. It is during the second half of the semester that the Delphi seminar becomes interesting – and sometimes problematic. Each week a different student is "it," as in hide-and-seek: the student receives interpretations of his

or her identity theme from the other students and must react to these interpretations. Although Holland tells his students to censor highly personal material – they are to disclose themes in their lives, not actual events – some students may become angry or defensive. Self-disclosure is notoriously difficult and fraught with peril; psychoanalysis, as Freud well knew, brings out the worst in people. It is not clear whether any of Holland's real Delphi seminars in Buffalo, where he taught for close to twenty years, and at the University of Florida in Gainsville, where he now teaches, has become emotionally explosive. In the novel, however, a fatal problem arises, not so much because of the seminar itself but because of the instability of two students: Hassler, who, it turns out, is victimized by her own murderous rage, and Christian Aval, a young Frenchman who first met Hassler at Yale, where they studied literature together and came under the influence of Yale's famous English Department, with its French poststructuralist approach to literature. Following the breakup of a stormy love affair with Hassler, in which each accused the other of plagiarizing an honor's essay, Aval followed her to Buffalo, where they both enrolled in "Holland's" seminar, despite the fact that their Franco-American views on literature are in sharp opposition to his Anglo-American ones.

Ironically, the students' instability accurately reflects their deconstructive belief that everything in language is built along a series of linguistic differences and that, consequently, every text reveals internal inconsistencies. Taking deconstruction to its most nihilistic conclusion, Hassler and Aval assert that nothing exists outside of language, which they claim is inherently duplicitous. In the novel's brief account of postmodernism, Nietzsche argued that the subject is only a fiction or construction; Foucault came along and proclaimed that the author is merely a projection of how we think about literary texts; then Roland Barthes followed with the claim that the reader is a composition of other texts of linguistic codes. In such a postmodern world, neither writers nor readers exist, only language. Gone, too, is the human self.

In seeking to exorcize the specter of postmodernism, which he regards as theoretically flawed, Holland insists that any totalistic philosophical system that abrogates human identity, autonomy, and free will is dangerous. Yet despite his critique of the more radical assumptions of postmodernism, he agrees with its premise that there is no real, true, or objective reality. The difference between Holland and other postmodern theorists is that whereas many of them privilege language over readers, he affirms that readers create their own interpretation based on their characteristic identity themes. Whereas most postmodernist theorists seem to be dismissive of actual experience, preferring to see things as they wish, not as they are, Holland has sought to examine real readers by studying their interpretive responses to literary texts. He would certainly agree with Freud and Charcot that theory is good but it doesn't prevent facts from existing – facts that each reader perceives differently.

Unlike Lacan, Holland maintains that we control our language more than it controls us. He also believes that the ego can reconcile the competing claims of the id and superego. Holland is in the tradition of Heinz Hartmann and Ernst Kris, who emphasized the adaptive, integrative functions of the ego. In further contrast to Lacan, Holland has created a psychoanalytic model of identity that is consistent with the findings of cognitive psychology and neurophysiological research into the functioning of the brain.

Although some readers will take issue with Holland's critique of postmodernism and his faith in the future of psychoanalysis, others will enjoy his satirical attack on the "New Cryptics," whose willfully obscure language has produced so many unreadable academic texts. Whether one agrees or disagrees with Holland's ideas, he is never guilty of linguistic mystification. Literary and psychoanalytic theory come alive in Death in a Delphi Seminar in ways that seldom occur either in textbooks or in classrooms. I suspect that an increasing number of graduate students and professors would secretly agree with the statement of one of the members of the Delphi seminar, who, exasperated by the dominance of theory in the academy, yearns for a return to the study of imaginative literature: "What I didn't anticipate was that the study of literature wouldn't be the study of literature. It would be this dreary 'theory.' That's why I'm taking this seminar. It has to do with real people reading books" (p. 223). If Death in a Delphi Seminar does not ring the death knell for theory, at least it reminds us of the enduring power of literature, which can never be reduced to ideology.

Norm's persona in the novel closely resembles the one he has portrayed throughout his scholarly writings – that of a man who is erudite, affable, witty, and passionately devoted to literature and psychoanalysis. Liberal in his social and political views and conservative in his lifestyle, he is totally committed to the life of the mind. If there is a darker side to his character, he keeps it carefully hidden. In one of the most autobiographically revealing statements in the novel, "Norman Holland" observes about his own identity theme: "I think my own motivation is, if I go deep enough, that I'd like to know what makes people tick, but I don't want to get close enough to find out" (p. 140). Those of us who have long admired and benefitted from his seminal contributions to psychoanalytic literary criticism will be delighted with Death in a Delphi Seminar, but we will have to wait for a psychobiographer to tell us the driving impetus behind his life and work.

"Immature poets borrow", T.S. Eliot quipped; "mature poets steal". I have stolen so many of the statements Norm makes in his books, such as "when psychoanalysis is good, it is very good; when it is bad, it is horrid." I regularly tell me students, echoing Norm, that "all knowledge is personal." At psychoanalytic conferences I politely but firmly avoid talks on Lacan, finding from experience that a diet on what Norm calls "French fried Freud" gives me heartburn. I have always appreciated Norm's heartfelt dedication of each book to his beloved Jane; I dedicate my books to my beloved Barbara, who was my muse in life and now in death.

I want to end on a note of respectful disagreement with Norm. "One repays a teacher badly if one remains only a pupil," Nietzsche observed wryly, and I think that Norm has never sufficiently appreciated the role of the teacher in general or his own teaching in particular. And here I want to draw a parallel between the therapist-patient and the teacher-student relationships. The existential psychiatrist Irwin Yalom states in his masterful novel The Schopenhauer Cure that "It's not ideas, nor vision, nor tools that truly matter in therapy. If you debrief patients at the end of therapy about the process, what do they remember? Never the ideas – it's always the relationship. They rarely remember an important insight their therapist offered but generally fondly recall their personal relationship with the therapist" (62-63; italics in original). Yalom makes a similar observation in his book Love's Executioner: "It's the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals, the relationship that heals–my professional rosary" (98). The same is true about education. Students remember best those teachers who have made a difference in their lives, who have encouraged and supported students rather than simply imparted knowledge to them. Were it not for Norm's professional endorsement of my work, I might not have received tenure in the late 1970s. My tenure committee judged my 1977 psychoanalytic study of Joseph Conrad unacceptable, and on the basis of that book concluded that I was "deficient in my ability to handle a literary text." The rejection was devastating because it spoke to that part of me that felt I was indeed intellectually deficient, not worthy of tenure. What saved me were the outside scholarly letters, especially Norm's. I still have his letter, which he sent to me afterwards. What I will always remember about Norm is not his publications, as important as they are, but his confidence in me, a confidence that I desperately needed at the time and that I have tried to instill in my own students.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 243-247

Relocating the Holocaust: Testimonies and Traumas

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I want to talk in a way that summarizes, all too quickly, a great deal of history and a great deal of material that has to do with witnessing trauma. I'm going to begin with a moment in a film that was produced about ten years ago called *The Long Way Home*. This is quite a well done documentary. It has to do with the years following the Second World War, and it focuses particularly on the Jewish survivors but it's about experiences that extend to millions of displaced persons as well, in Europe between the years 1945 to 1948. It's very well narrated by Morgan Freeman and contains readings on his part, and others, of a great number of diaries, letters, and so on. There's a great deal of verbal documentary evidence as well as visual documentary evidence in this film. Part of the way through there's a moment that really astonished me for a number of reasons, some of them very personal. An American soldier, a Rabbi who is the chaplain in his platoon finds himself on the outskirts of Dachau with no assignment, nothing to do. He doesn't know how he can contribute to the recovery. Although he had seen a glimpse of what had occurred, what and who remained in the camp, he couldn't get himself to go in for days. But finally he felt he had to try to do something. So he went into a barracks where survivors were still living in the same exact conditions that they had been liberated from, "on shelves", as he says. And it was very dark. He couldn't see anyone for a while.

And he says he heard a voice, and the voice said, "Do you know my brother?" And he was startled because he recognized the voice, and he said, "Yes, I know your brother. And it turns out that the brother was a psychiatrist that this man, who was a doctor, knew in Cleveland. And what he did was literally to recognize a voice. And he then began a project which led to a lot of other attempts at reconciliation of families, including this man with his brother.

What struck me there was the incredible moment of the voice recognition. Let me tell you a personal root of this. I have exactly the same voice as my now deceased twin brother. So when the Rabbi soldier recognized the voice that way I said to myself, "Well wait a minute, there's something here". Because my experience at that moment linked up with a larger resonance, with the repeated emphasis in Holocaust and trauma writings about witnessing of the voice, giving people a voice, letting people have a voice, the way we used the voice metaphorically, but also literally, in speaking. The moment in the video rooted in me and ramified. Literally, the voice, and the echoing response in ourselves to the voice. And that in turn links up with the ways in which, in our culture and places all around the world, but particularly in America and some parts of Europe, we have devised

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contemporary technologies in order to give tens of thousands of survivors a voice. We are creating huge archives of video testimonies in which people have an opportunity to be seen, but even more importantly to be heard. And we're also creating in parts of the world, not just in America and Europe, but in say South Africa and other parts of Africa, opportunities for reconciliation which give victims as well as perpetrators a voice, a forum to speak.

The voice has many levels of resonance and meaning in this process. And it is part of a process of validating witnessing that has accelerated astonishingly since the Second World War. Recently a very interesting book called *The Era of the Witness* by Annette Wieviorka, written in French about six years ago, was translated into English. Wieviorka's book is a response to the phenomenon of generating what you might call the technology of witnessing: writing, video, documentary testimonies, and so on. Wieviorka briefly recounts a history that is important to recall in light of contemporary confessional media. The need to witness the traumatic experiences of the World War II period – I'm saying it that way deliberately because it extends beyond the Jewish victims – began immediately. We now have and continue to discover written testimonies of the experience, the traumatic experiences, that were done immediately and hidden, transmitted in other ways, sometimes secretly. They're literally being dug up all the time. There are documents buried around the crematoria that are still to be found. Nobody will ever know how many thousands of such documents were buried and not found. In the ghettos, documentation became an obsession. People were writing and burying and trying to preserve a record of the experience as it was happening.

But then a period, which is manifest in other traumatic situations, say Viet Nam, a period of silence follows, a period of non-acceptance. Nobody wants to hear this anymore, even though the victims can't stop talking right after the experience. Nobody wants to hear you. And so a silence descends. And then some ten or fifteen years later something else happens. The voice begins to re-emerge. This happened with writing about Vietnam, it happened in the period just before the Eichmann trial which brought personal testimony into a focus. It was the moment of witnessing that defined what you might call the era of the witness, because the Eichmann trial was a deliberately staged witnessing of the Holocaust for television, not just for the education of the Israeli public. So at that point witnessing became a pedagogical tool, not just to teach about the Holocaust but to teach about trauma and its effects in general.

By now, today, the witnessing of trauma has become a general cultural obsession in America and other parts of the world, so that what we're seeing and hearing is a strangely robust phenomenon. I didn't know when I came here that the recently published diary, *A Woman in Berlin*, would be the subject of one of our talks. But I'm grateful to Ann Wyatt-Brown for discussing that book, because it's one example of many in which there is a kind of universalizing and generalizing of the witnessing of trauma going on in our culture. In her talk, Ann voiced no distinction made between Germans and Jews. Between one victim and another. In the Berlin woman's diary, even her husband becomes a kind of victim, although he's just returning from the German army. This is a phenomenon that's happening in a very broad way today. The Pope, for example, recently visited the cemetery in which he mourned the loss of the young German lives that were a part of the German traumatic experience of the Second World War. When we read trauma narratives and when we listen to witnesses, there's a kind of dedifferentiating of historical experience that encourages a sense of equivalence, and in some ways that's a very valid sense because pain is pain and trauma is trauma and war is war and suffering is suffering.

But on the other hand – and Wieviorka makes a big point of this – the witnessing process, the testimonial process begins to work against historical knowledge. It begins to create a sense that all of us have suffered, that in some way everyone is a victim, and in some sense we're all subjects of historical abuse. Trauma then becomes a universalized experience which we can use for pedagogical purposes, and in fact this is the explicit intention of the Holocaust museum in Washington, to teach people tolerance by using a convenient example -the events and survivors of the Holocaust. We can easily see how this intention becomes problematic.

How, then, do we differentiate among traumatic experiences? How do we retain the particularities of history that might actually teach us to act differently as opposed to endlessly

witnessing the effects of universal traumatic experiences? I have asked myself that question many times, having been immersed in testimonies for a long time – written testimonies, visual testimonies, archives of testimonies. If you spend time in these archives – I think everyone who's been in these archives has had this experience – you can easily feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of traumatic accounts. There are tens of thousands. There are a few thousand at Yale. There are 50,60, maybe 70 or 80 thousand now in Los Angeles, at the Shoah Foundation that Steven Spielberg started, now housed at USC where a lot of people can have access to it. The Shoah archive is digitized. You can search some 50,000 testimonies, whereas, if you go to the Fortunoff Archive at Yale you have to watch an hour and a half of each person in order to have an account of a person's experience. This is analogous to listening to the Nixon tapes. You can spend easily the rest of your life doing nothing but listening to testimonies.

Nobody will ever be able to do this. We've accumulated more testimony than we can witness. And it's certainly not simply for a historical record because as we know memory is extremely slippery, constantly changing. Holocaust accounts, like accounts of dreams, change every time they are told, and a great deal of this material is not very useful for historical documentation. In fact, if you listen to any particular survivor's account, you're likely to come away with some questions about historical factuality – did this happen there or there, do you remember this or this – because the witnesses are frequently simply invited in a general interview structure to tell their stories with very little dialogue. There's no opportunity for questioning, dialogue or conversation. You're in a sense a mute witness to the testimony because you can't actually interact with people.

So what can we learn from these testimonies? That's the question I began to ask myself. Aside from the overwhelmingly prevalent nature of traumatic experience, what can we learn from these things? Well this is where the voice comes in for me because as I am listening to these accounts, and I've listened to several hundred on various occasions, I hear distinctive voices. This is an interesting fact about human beings. As we grow beyond adolescence and into our later years – and most survivors are old – what changes least is our voice. And of course I'm sensitive to that because when I hear my voice on the tape of this presentation, I will hear my dead twin brother's voice. It's uncanny in the case of twins that you hear someone else's voice. When I hear the testimonies I listen for a distinctive voice, how the person speaks as well as the exact words they say, the tone and style of the voice. And one of the values of a psychoanalytic way of listening is that you listen for the exact words, but you're also hearing a way of speaking, a voice, a persona. Occasionally the voice stops. It happens in virtually every account. The voice gets stuck. Sometimes there's an emotional body language that goes with this, sometimes it's just a kind of stutter or silence. But the voice stops. And so I began to ask myself why are these voices stopping, when does the voice get stuck or pause. And a pattern began to emerge. The voice stops at a moment of remembered separation. One survivor stops, and then says, "Then I remembered it was Passover and we couldn't celebrate". He recalls, his voice repeats, an experience of being cut off from a life-sustaining ritual. "That was when I lost sight of my father" says another survivor. Voice stops. That was when a particular traumatic crisis occurred. The voice stops when there's a break in the sense of the continuity of experience. You can watch and listen to this in testimony after testimony. The voice also stops when there's a moment of particularly strong emotional representation. I mean that literally. The emotion returns; it is not displaced to narrative or expressed symbolically. We share a feeling from a past made present. A survivor, for example, is talking about hunger and his voice stops.

Then he says, "You don't know what it felt like, being that hungry". So the voice stops when the trauma recurs. Jean-François Lyotard calls this the "differend", the moment beyond language. The survivor says, "I don't know how to say this". Voice stops. "I don't know what to say". The voice will stop.

To better understand these "differends", I began to listen for the silences surrounding the expressions of guilty memory. My time does not permit a full exploration of the intricate phenomena of shame and guilt in Holocaust testimonies. Suffice it to say that I began to focus on the expression, the overt expression of guilt. If you are at an archive like the Spielberg archive, you can

search for these narratives. You don't have to listen for three weeks to find them. You can enter the key words "survivor guilt' and you will be presented with 600, 800, 2.000 instances of when people explicitly talk about feeling guilty. When you search that way, you find that the voice also stops when there's a moment of guilt. I began to hear two kinds of guilt in the testimonies. One I would call "Guilt For" and the other I would call "Guilt As". What I mean by "Guilt For" is guilt for having done or not having done some particular thing. "And then I didn't hold on to his hand. I feel guilty that I let him go". One woman says in a Fortunoff archive testimony, "I handed over the bundle", which is what she calls her infant child that she gave to an SS officer in a terrified, unthinkable moment. Or: "I didn't share my food, I'm ashamed to say, because I was so hungry, and I feel guilty about that". Guilt For. There are very many instances of "Guilt For" having done *and* for not having done something. This is an affect that Robert Lifton observed as very prevalent among the survivors of Hiroshima because it's so important in Japanese culture to help people when they're in distress. Survivor of the atomic bomb felt very guilty for not being able to help other victims in the aftermath of the explosion.

But there's also another kind of guilt that is expressed when the voice stops, and this is what I am calling "Guilt As". Its core meaning is, "I am guilty for surviving, guilty for being alive. I am guilty because I lived and they died". That's a deeper kind of guilt, an existential guilt. It reminds me of a paper Arnold Modell wrote many years ago, in the 1960's in which he speaks of "Ur fantasies", archaic, perhaps universal, fantasies. An Ur fantasy might take the form, "If I have something good, I am depriving another or it", as if there were a certain amount of goodness or provision in the world and if I possess some of it this is because I have stolen it. An extreme form would be "All the good things I have are stolen". This may be related to feelings of envy later on, but it is a sense of being Guilty For having something that in fact you had no control over having. Moments like that stop the voice also.

Listening in this way began to offer or restore to me a sense of the particularity of testimonies. I was learning that if you listen with this third ear you can begin to redifferentiate the victims from the perpetrators, and the victims *in* the perpetrators, within the great sea of testimony that we have created and which tends to merge all voices into universal, undifferentiated and a historical experiences. That became for me the central value of spending time in the archives and in the history of testimonies because it provided a way to reconcile the leveling effect of testimony with the particularities of history, without which I don't think we will learn very much from the culture of the witness.

On the other hand I wouldn't claim that this has a healing effect. What it does is to create what Susan Gubar calls a kind of "proxy witnessing", in which I become or feel that I've become a container for the witness, as that other voice becomes then a presence in me, and I can say to myself I have listened to someone who is in some sense still present from the past, one who has been there. And so another value of the witnessing process is that I can then in some way try to contain a moment of historical experience, a person's experience heard in a living voice from that person -the expression of, "I was there!" that echoes all the way back to the *Book of Job*. "I was there and I have lived to tell it". By containment, I mean what Bion and other psychoanalysts mean, not just holding something of another's experience in me, but in some way using it as a form of self-transformation. That "proxy" too is a value of witnessing.

But for the "proxy witness" something remains – and let me end with this. What always remains, I think, in this process is what Susan Brison calls the "surd" element of trauma. Brison uses that word, very interestingly, in its mathematical sense. A "surd" in mathematics is something that doesn't fit in a sequence. A simple example would be for me to say 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16. Where did the 11 come from? It is a "surd", mathematically speaking. Traumatic experiences are frequently voiced with a sense of something *absurd* in that the coherence of the narrative does not, finally, account for the experience that gives rise to it. The felt memory of the experience is not fully metabolized in the narrative, is felt to be beyond the language itself. And the witnessing or a proxy witnessing of narratives also is a way for us to contain something of this historical absurdity.

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Proceedings of the 25th International Conference on Literature and Psychoanalysis: 249-254

Plea for tolerance — Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *The Jewess of Toledo*

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> Literature is a form of responsibility – for literature itself and for society. ... Anyone who tells a story says, this is now right, and reduces the fullness and simultaneity of everything to something linear, to a path[1].

Stimulated by a visit to Spain in 1926, Lion Feuchtwanger discovered in Toledo in a chronicle by Alfonso the Wise, the *Cronica general* from 1284, the fascinating love story between Alfonso's great-grandfather, Alfonso VIII of Castile, and the beautiful, educated Jewess of Toledo, Raquel, called "La Fermosa", "the beauty". In the course of the centuries, this historical background becomes the foundation for various literary adaptations, most well-known *La Jerulasen cónquistada* from 1609 and *Las paces de los reyes y judía de Toledo* from 1616, two works by Lope de Vega, as well as the Jewess of Toledo from 1873 by Franz Grillparzer. The dramatic events of the following years, the rise to power of Hitler, war and exile, allowed Feuchtwanger to make his own adaptation only in 1954/55.

The novel begins with a description of the situation in Spain of the twelfth century, eighty years after the death of the Prophet, when the Muslims have built up a large empire with a superior culture and flourishing cities. The capital of the Occident is Córdova. At that time, Spain is being shaken by numerous struggles, crusades and pogroms, a complex historical situation which, in his novel, Feuchtwanger reduces and fictionally intensifies. One part of the Christian Visigoths is still in the north of Spain. The Pope has declared a crusade in which Islam is to be driven out of the countries which it has taken from the Christians. The Muslims, who at that time were refined, could not withstand the wildness of the Christians. Many Jews emigrate. Some remain in Spain and convert to Islam, for instance, the rich Jewish merchant, Jehuda Ibn Esra, who lives with his daughter in Toledo, and who, since the Christians need the money and the expertise of the Jews, becomes the finance minister of the Christian ruler of Castile, Alfonso VIII, and purchases from him the Castillo del Castro. Alfonso has been locked in a permanent feud with the Castros for many years.

Even though the title of the novel is *The Jewess of Toledo*, Raquel is by no means the novel's protagonist but is surrounded by other equally important main figures such as Alfonso, Leonor, his rightful spouse, Don Rodrique, the archbishop's adviser, and Musa Ibn Da'ud, Jehuda's doctor and librarian who, although of the Muslim faith, calls himself a believer of all three religions.

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[1] Susan Sontag, Frankfuter Allgemeine Zeitung, 30 December 2004.

In the description of his activities, behaviour and views, Musa becomes, so to speak, one of Lessing's protagonists very well known from literature. He reminds us of "Nathan the Wise"[2]. In Lessing's *Nathan the Wise*, Nathan is enticed by the Caliph into a trap. He is supposed to explain to him which religion is the true one. Nathan answers him with the parable of the ring in which tolerance is demonstrated. But Nathan does not go as far as trying to relativize all three religions like Musa does in "The Jewess of Toledo". "I don't make much difference between the three prophets. ... Moses means as much to me as Christ and Christ as much as Mohammed"[3], and later on, "I am a believer of the three religions. ... Each one has its good points and each one teaches things which reason resists believing"[4]. Nathan's tolerance does not allow any merging of the three religions, whereas Feuchtwanger's "Jewess of Toledo" in the figure of Musa allows everything to appear as one.

On the pragmatic level in dealing with people, Musa and Nathan agree. They entertain relations with people of all three religions and exercise compassion and empathy vis-à-vis those who have gotten into trouble. Nathan takes in the daughter of the deceased crusader and allows her to be educated like his own daughter. Nathan, however, is a merchant, Musa a librarian.

A further main protagonist is Raquel's father, Don Jehuda. Earlier, after the victory of the Muslims over the Christians, and abandoned by his parents, Jehuda was brought up as a Muslim and became friends with the son of the Caliph. He has grown up in the Muslim tradition, language, religion, art and culture, but in his heart he has always remained true to the Jewish religion. This has also favoured his successful advancement with the Caliph, who knows about Jehuda's double religious commitment and tolerates it. Through the offer of becoming Alfonso's finance minister, Jehuda takes advantage of the opportunity of making his experiences available to both sides whilst at the same time furthering his own interests. In this way he can influence both of the warring parties in favour of a long period of peace, the promotion of the general well-being and the reconstruction of stable economic and cultural conditions.

Initially Jehuda had hesitated to take on this position because he also realized the dangers of this mission. Finally, however, the decisive factor for him was not only the augmentation of Castile's wealth, but the possibility of protecting the Jewish community in Toledo from further persecution. Furthermore, he promotes the cause of the Frankish Jewish refugees fleeing from persecution in their own country so that they can settle in Castile.

To start with, all his aims are fulfilled and are strengthened even more by the love relationship between his daughter, Raquel, and Alfonso, which he does nothing to prevent. The contact between Alfonso and Raquel came about through an invitation from Leonor, Alfonso's rightful spouse, to their official residence, Burgos, where the future son-in-law, Don Pedro, is to be dubbed knight. Jehuda and his two children – his son, Alazar, and his daughter, Raquel – are also invited. Alazar is later called by Alfonso to be a page at his court and, after some time, converts there to Christianity.

Alfonso and Leonor are struck by Raquel's unconstrained and open nature. And even though Raquel seems to be somewhat forward and criticizes Alfonso's raw, formidable castle, she nevertheless excites Alfonso's secret interest and pleasure. He wants to see her again and disguises his intention in a request to help him with the restoration of his summer residence La Galiana near Toledo. Raquel sees through this obvious ploy and is offended. But Alfonso does not give up.

In a sophisticated move, he first gives the castle to Jehuda and, when he refuses, because he already has his own Castillo, to Raquel.

Please understand me, I want your daughter to live here. ... Sic volo[5].

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2 Cf. Fawzi Boubia 'Die Ringparabel im Exil: Judentum, Christentum und Islam bei Lion Feuchtwanger' in *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik* Series A, Conference Reports, Vol. 61, Berlin, New York, Vienna 2003 pp. 337-341.

3 Lion Feuchtwanger *Die Jüdin von Toledo* Berlin 1955, 6th printing p. 76.

4 ibid. p. 224.

5 ibid. p. 163.

Later on, Jehuda asks Raquel what she thinks of Alfonso as a man, and to his surprise she says:

"I am not averse to this king, my father"[6].

However, she asks for a further wish to be fulfilled:

> Then I desire (said Raquel) that before I go to La Galiana, inscriptions should be made on the walls which remind me in good time of what is right, and I request you, my father, to choose the inscriptions[7].

At La Galiana, an intimate cohabitation develops between Alfonso and Raquel. Bound to each other in passionate sensuousness, they also have a great joy in talking to each other.

> They chatted excitedly. She had to explain and tell; so much of what affected her was strange to him and he wanted to know everything, and he understood her whether she spoke Arabian, Latin or Castilian. And new things continued to occur to him, too, which surely interested her and which he had to tell her straightaway. Every word which one of them said was important, even though it sounded so insignificant and playful, and if they were alone, each recollected the words of the other and thought about them and smiled. It was marvellous to understand each other so well even though each was so different from the other. In their innermost feelings they were the same; each felt precisely what the other was feeling – a boundless happiness.
>
> Oh, the bliss when they merged into one another[8].

Raquel showed her classical education. Alfonso was amazed, but he understood her also without words. Their happiness lasts a long time, seven years, and it is so intense that he forgets his official business.

> Everyone felt it – that he was neglecting his duties as knight and king, that he had succumbed to her charms, just like the ancient heroes, Hercules and Antonius, had done, and also the Hebrew knight Samson with his Delilah[9].

Despite the great harmony, a latent flaw remains in their relationship. When Alfonso asks her about an inscription in her house she translates:

> An ounce of peace is worth more than an ounce of victory[10].

But Alfonso calls this nonsense. That, he says, is something for peasants and burghers, but not for knights. Raquel, however, remains monosyllabic (eloquently silent) throughout this evening. All her attempts to turn this knight into a human being have failed. But she loved also the knight. Fascinated by the powerful man, Raquel wanted also the 'ennoblement' of the knight through lived humanity, the sensitive and receptive knight.

Despite Jehuda's attempts to hold him back from his numerous military campaigns – crusades, strife with the Castros, conflict with the empire of Aragon – he remains in his heart a knight and fighter. His wife, Leonor, plays a great role in this. He calls on her in Burgos every now and then to seek her advice.

Regarding power he is close to his wife, but in love he belongs to Raquel. Leonor tries, of course, to destroy the relationship between Raquel and Alfonso. Clever as she is, she does not address

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6 ibid. p. 171.

7 ibid. p. 172.

8 ibid. p. 178.

9 ibid. p. 202.

10 ibid. p. 180.

the relationship with Raquel directly, but makes a claim on his obligations as the commander of the army and the protector of the Christian Occident. But finally she drives him into further military adventures that end in chaos which even Jehuda cannot prevent.

Jehuda's visions and wishes shatter in the end. But that this had already begun earlier through him demonstrating his position, power and wealth patronizingly before Don Ephraim, the head of the Jewish community, and not only before him, but also before others. This brings him certain disadvantages such as the engendering of envy against him as a successful man and ultimately the destruction of his and Raquel's existence.

Leonor's plotting and scheming seems to work. Alfonso loses the Battle of Alarcos against the Muslims. And Leonor makes Jehuda responsible for the defeat, well knowing that she was the one who had urged her husband into battle. With an intentional intrigue, she believes she has the right to call someone the guilty party.

She travels to Toledo and allows her scheme to unfold freely. With some finesse, she incites the head of the Jewish community, Don Ephraim, who is now also a relative of the Castros, in whose earlier possession Jehuda has now also set himself up, and allows him to believe that Jehuda is really the guilty one. The mob storms the castle.

> It must away, that there! It must be dead! It must lie in the ruins, all that fine, opulent, Jewish, feminine, heathen stuff![11].

Meanwhile, Raquel is waiting with her father for the return of Don Alfonso, which had been his last wish before the battle. Raquel and Jehuda are murdered by the incensed mob.

Alfonso finally returns from the lost battle and stands before the destroyed La Galiana. Shaken by the death of Raquel and Jehuda, he recognizes his wife, Leonor, as the one who has instigated all this unhappiness, and turns away from her forever.

From then on he renounces all knighthood. Through the death of Raquel and Jehuda, he has understood something of his senseless longing for heroism.

> I have calmed down. I am free of violent cravings. I have become a better king. I should be satisfied, but I am not[12].

He commissions Don Ephraim to negotiate peace. He is to conclude a twelve-year truce with the Caliph.

Alfonso arranges a dignified burial for Raquel and Jehuda. After they had been buried in a shallow grave after the murder, their corpses are now exhumed, and a long funeral procession, at Alfonso's behest with the participation of the town's inhabitants, passes through the streets of Toledo. They are buried in the Juderia, the old, distinguished Jewish cemetery.

The only visionary stance remaining for Alfonso is that, despite his urging her to a Christian baptism, Raquel had remained true to her Jewish faith. But the whereabouts of the son born of the love between Alfonso and Raquel, whom, with Raquel's knowledge, Jehuda had removed to an unknown place before the war, to protect him from being baptized a Christian by Alfonso, remain a secret.

Initially, Lion Feuchtwanger tried to retell the biblical story of Esther for our times. In doing so, he hoped to shed light and meaning on the darkness of our times. In the end, however, he tried to realize the theme in the story of Raquel and Alfonso. Spain in the twelfth century as a theatre of struggles and religious conflicts seems to him to be the appropriate setting.

Feuchtwanger was concerned to connect the historical novel to the present time. Affected by the situation in Palestine, particularly in 1948 after the founding of the independent state of Israel, initially he was convinced that this was not sensible. But after his exile, and after his personal experiences in Germany and France, he made a speech at the New York World Exposition on 22 October 1940, shortly after his arrival in America, in which he supported the setting up of a Jewish state.

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[11] ibid. p. 428.

[12] ibid. p. 498.

Over the years Feuchtwanger modified his concept of the historical novel. Although his core thesis is maintained that history through fictionalization enables greater identification of the reader because of the dramaticization. The reader's interest is reinforced by the sensuously experienced description of the experiences of the authorial narrator. Through the fictionalization, the reader's illusion is enhanced which in any case is more lively, richer and more colourful than concrete everyday reality. By clothing a contemporary content in an historical costume, the option of a distancing and thus of observing without fear as well as a change of perspective is opened up. This alienation is conceived by Feuchtwanger as an intensification of interest and attentiveness. He even goes so far as to believe, like Brecht, that this kind of alienation drives the reader into self-reflection[13]. The difficulty of transposing historical themes into the present to find answers to questions in our own times was recognized by no less a writer than Lion Feuchtwanger in his novels, *The Jewess of Toledo* from 1955 and *Jefta and His Daughter* from 1957. Through the modern mass media of our own day, this literary view of history has receded somewhat into the background.

Despite the detailed historical descriptions, the novel also has fairy-tale characteristics regarding the description of beauties, of an ideal state in which all three religions productively and beneficially interact and transform each other under the leadership of a Muslim world empire in which art, science and architecture achieve their full flowering. There are large interconnections between the times, but only with respect to the framework plot.

The original title of the novel was *Spanish Ballad*. On the level of depth psychology he shows a varying process between doing and not doing, between taking an initiative and passively letting things happen. All the main figures come up against the limits of their life projects.

The rich merchant, Jehuda, fails with his concept for peace and reason, loses his son to Christianity, his daughter, Raquel, to King Alfonso of Castile, and finally he is punished with death by the crowd that has been incited by Leonor.

Raquel falls in love with the caring, but politically short-sighted Alfonso. In the beginning she still believes in being able to humanize him, among other things, through the inscriptions which she has made on the walls of her house; in the end she has to see that he remains true to his old doctrine and even wants to convert her to Christianity. However, to avoid falling prey to any weakness, she sacrifices her son by allowing him to be sent to a secret place, thus ensuring that the faith of her fathers is preserved.

Before the birth, Raquel believed she was bearing the Messiah – knowledge that had been passed on to her by her father, that she was a descendant of King David.

> Raquel's very strange fate made her believe that she was bearing the Messiah. He was supposed to come from the house of David, and was she not, the Ibn Esra, a princess from the house of David? And the great, dangerous happiness that the Christian King had chosen her to be his companion, did that not point to a quite extraordinary destiny? She palpated her body, listened inwardly to herself; she smiled deeply, and her belief became firmer and firmer that she was bearing the Prince of Peace, the Messiah. But she did not speak with anyone about it. ... In La Galiana in the meantime, Dona Raquel looked at and tenderly touched her son. Quietly she flattered him and caressed him and called him Immanuel, the name of the Messiah[14].

The tradition of the lineage ends with the death of the last two faithful of the family Ibn Esra.

Alfonso represents the Christian ideal of the period, the knight who is supposed to defend the Christians of Jerusalem against the Muslims. Even though Alfonso is convinced of his ideal of

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[13] Cf. Lion Feuchtwanger 'Vom Sinn und Unsinn des historischen Romans' Centum Opuscula, Rudolstadt 1956, first published 1935 pp. 508-515 and Mattias Johannes Fischer 'Aspekte einer fragmentarischen Theorie des historischen Romans bei Feuchtwanger' in *Text und Kritik* No. 79/80 Munich 1983 pp. 19-27.

[14] Lion Feuchtwanger *Die Jüdin von Toledo* Berlin 1955 pp. 295 and 307.

knighthood, nevertheless he can allow himself to enter the free-floating conversations with Raquel at La Galiana. These associative dialogues, viewed psychoanalytically, are, so to speak, reinforced by the rules of the inscriptions in the house and welded together into a working alliance.

Through Alfonso's super-ego structures becoming loosened up by libido, he can develop a temporary free space for experimental behaviour and an opening for a critical questioning of norms and commandments. Only through a renewed relapse into warring conflicts (recollection – repetition – working through / Freud) and through being shaken by the death of Raquel and Jehuda, can he recognize his false destructive ideals through the process of mourning these losses.

The secret of the son of Alfonso and Raquel, the possible Prophet Messiah, remains postponed to the future as a mission. Here Feuchtwanger shows a dialectically ongoing process of knowledge in the story which follows the principle of hope.

The entire novel is dominated by a father-daughter motif. The Oedipal dependency between father and daughter cannot be solved by triangulation on the part of the father. The tragic symbiosis ends finally in death and can only be resolved psychodynamically in the following generation by Raquel's son as a legacy: the clarification of conflicts of loyalty and the reconciliation of the various life-accounts.