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The April 2004 Centre for Comparative Literature's Graduate Student Colloquium was a great success in that it was able to synthesize divergent fields of study into a forum which not only encouraged dialogue, but encouraged a deeper understanding of various literary disciplines, as well. I am honoured to present several of those papers given at this recent colloquium in the second issue of **Trans*verse.***

Stay tuned for a third isse of **Trans*verse*** this coming winter which will focus on the visual interpretations of various artists (photographers, graphic designers, illustrators, painters...) in and around the University of Toronto campus, and various other campuses in the city.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Annarita Primier

CONTENTS

MYTH AS METAPHOR: THE REFLECTION OF THE SACRED IN THE SECULAR IN *A RIVER SUTRA*
julie **mehta**

(*A River Sutra* was on the list for the Booker Prize the same year Roddy Doyle got the booker for *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* and Salman Rushdie received the Booker of Bookers. The year was 1993.)

This essay ponders the complex nexus between the ancient-sacred and the contemporary-secular in a current piece of fiction. It explores the growing trend of living South Asian fiction writers writing in English, who are synthesising ancient legends in archaic Sanskrit with current social practices, in the "new" language English and a changing ethos. To provide a mythic-historical-geographical context, I have included several images from my collection over twelve years, of the relevant icons, to illustrate this presentation which I hope you will find interesting.

Focusing on the creator-destroyer deity Siva and the serpent image in the Hindu myths of creation that abound in classical Sanskrit texts, Gita Mehta's *A River Sutra* addresses the inevitable crosscurrents that arise when an ancient literature meets a modern tongue. This paper celebrates the presence of myth as an extremely powerful tool that can connect not only the past with the present but an obsolete language with a global *lingua franca*, allowing us an experience to read across borders of times, genres, literary traditions and spaces.

India is a place where many worlds and times collide with huge velocity: there are satellites being launched and bullock carts being driven at the same moment; there's the constant tension and contradiction of immense sophistication and an almost pre-medieval way of life. Since *A River Sutra* incorporates both oral and written traditions of mythmaking, including those based in folk cults, it evinces a flexibility of transculturation, grafting the primordial on to the contemporary, lending itself appropriately to an analysis of an alternative vision of established life. In the Postcolonial context, this work underlines the importance of salvaging a lost tradition of rich religious heritages, their enormous strength to provide anchors for finding new identities among different religious communities in India, and their influence on a new generation of youth who must cohabit a highly multi-racial and multi-religious world. And most of important of all for Comparative Literature scholars, *A River Sutra* fits remarkably well into the framework of our colloquium: Comparative Horizons: Reading across Borders.

A River Sutra makes clear its involvement with the sacred at the outset. Its central character is the Narmada river (8): "It is said that Shiva, Creator and Destroyer of Worlds, was in an ascetic trance so strenuous, that rivulets of perspiration began flowing from his body down the hills. The stream took on the form of a woman – a beautiful virgin innocently tempting even ascetics to pursue her, inflaming their lust by appearing at one moment as a lightly dancing girl, at another as a romantic dreamer, at yet another as a seductress loose-limbed with the lassitude of desire. Her inventive variations so amused Shiva, that he named her Narmada

the Delightful One, blessing her with the words 'you shall be forever holy, forever inexhaustible.' Then he gave her in marriage to the most lustrous of all her suitors, the ocean, Lord of Rivers." However, further down the story, the river is addressed in profane terms: first in a suggestive image with the narrator wondering one night, what the ascetics thought about as they watched the water flowing from some secret stream, whispering in eddies below their crossed legs, mysterious and alluring in the dying night. "Did they brood on the Narmada as the proof of Shiva's great penance or did they imagine her as a beautiful woman dancing towards the Arabian Sea, arousing the lust of ascetics like themselves…?"(132-133); and again: "Did you know narmada means a whore in Sanskrit?" (143-144) are the rhetorical questions posed. This shifts the markers from the sacred to the secular sphere. Thus, the narrative is haunted by a remarkable tension that appears to arise from a curious mixture of affirmation of faith in the celebration of life and the related activity of living. Desire, sorrow, passionate intensity, blind faith, disappointment, pain and love, stand firm on the one hand; and an equally powerful consciousness of renunciation (stemming from the Hindu concept of *tyaga* or giving up) are deeply entrenched in the work's fabric, on the other -- with the related associations of realization, detachment, calmness and wisdom.

This constant flux between binaries creates a string of questions: Does the sacred then permeate into the secular, and from the private to the public? What role does the exalted rhetoric of myth-making play in the narrative of the profane? How do the stories of the human sphere become the mirrors in which the myths of the divine are reflected? These are the pieces of the puzzle we are presented in *A River Sutra*, and must attempt to connect if we are to understand the wide and contradictory connotations of myth as metaphor, as reflected in the construct of six stories of secular life, which constantly evoke and echo the sacred and mythical imaginary.

The plot is deceptively simple: A retired civil servant erroneously believes he has escaped the secular world of frenetic turmoil to spend his twilight years running a guest house on the banks of the Narmada[1], a sacred river of the Hindus, and closely linked with Siva[2], the god of destruction and creation. Almost instantly he realizes his folly and finds himself encountering life in the raw, more so than he had as a bureaucrat. As each pilgrim comes to his inn, he is exposed to yet another slice of secular life. The inn strategically sits at the hub of the sacred sites dotted along the river, and becomes a confluence of sacred and secular spaces. And the inn becomes the crossroads of many lives who flow, like Narmada's own tides, in and out of the indeterminate geography.

The six stories -- about a young and wealthy diamond merchant who becomes a Jain monk, the murder of an innocent singer with an exceptional musical talent, the seduction of a tea-garden executive by an tribal woman who possesses his spirit, the tale of a courtesan abducted by a bandit and is finally driven to suicide, the story of a musician who cannot come to terms with her physical disfigurement and consequent abandonment by her betrothed, and the tale of an eminent anthropologist who becomes a mendicant of the Naga cult, followers

of a tantric band of Siva worshippers, and then subsequently returns to his secular existence after saving a child from being sold into prostitution -- are loosely bound together by an active narrator, who performs the function of a *sutradhar*[3] or a storyteller right through the narrative. He forms the link between the sacred and the secular, creating an autonomous cultural space where a self-reflexive repositioning allows him unhindered access to both the secular and the sacred spheres. Through the imagined adoption of the other's point of view, the narrator is empowered to act as a transitional force. As the narrative unfolds through transformative experiences from the narrator's encounters with the pilgrims, the narrator effectively channels a dialogic relation between writer and reader, within this sacred-and-secular space.

 "I am now a *vanaprasthi,* someone who has retired to the forest to reflect," declares the narrator of *A River Sutra* in the first paragraph of the novel setting the tone for the sacred to be manifest through him. The narrator in this tale therefore, is also a person already spiritually awake through the consciousness and meditative experience. By his very presence he has begun a process whereby he internalizes the meaning within sacred stories and ceremonies. In Indian philosophy, this process of internalization becomes extremely important in the third stage of life known as *vanaprashtha*[4] or *aranyaka*. In this stage, as the narrator reminds us frequently through *A River Sutra,* a person has become a forest dweller, and one's spiritual practice consists of meditation and symbolic worship rather than participation in temple rituals[5]. "Many are like myself, quite elderly persons who have completed the first stages of life prescribed by our Hindu scriptures …and who have entered the state of *vanaprastha* to seek personal enlightenment." (7). But this is not an end, he also reminds us, but a means to the ultimate stage. The fourth and final stage of life in Indian philosophy is known as *sannyasa.* In this last stage, the aspirant lives free from worldly attachments and becomes engaged in uninterrupted contemplation of Brahman, the Ultimate Reality. At this stage it is no longer necessary to worship God by means of material articles or even mental symbols. One experienced directly the non-duality of God, the soul, and the universe--Spirit (*atman* or soul) communing immediately with Spirit (*paramatma* or Eternal Spirit). The Sannyasin took the vow of dedicating his life to Truth and to the service of humanity, and was honoured as a spiritual leader of society. And it was for him that the Upanishads[6] were written.

The narrator therefore is constantly straddling both worlds: of *vanaprastha*--with links to the sacred, and mythical world of the divine; and *grihastha*-- with its associations with temptation and succumbing to the hunger of flesh. Of the six encounters the one with the most complex interplay between the sacred and the secular is the story of Nitin Bose, the successful young tea-estate manager from Assam. Bose's explicit need to "reveal" and thereby vicariously relive and share his trauma, enjoins the narrator in a tryst with his destiny, and Bose requests the innkeeper to read the journal that tells his story: "You will understand why I must find the shrine. Read my diary," he says. The narrator uses the social penetration theory in order to reach out of his personal space to the larger space of Bose (and the other pilgrims) [7]. Knowing from his secular experience that self-disclosure and instant intimacy are myths, especially when "the other", like Bose, is vulnerable and lacks self-worth, the narrator uses a distant though sympathetic approach in retelling Bose's story. As he reads aloud

the private journal of the possessed executive, and engages the reader in a tripartite "agreement" between Bose, the reader and himself, he forges a channel where the reader may enter as a flaneur[8] , a voyeur, and participate in the sacred ritual in the Narmada's waters and vicariously cleanse himself with Bose.

Thus, once again, the narrator becomes the link between the reader and Bose, as he unravels the complex tale of seduction and ritualistic possession. Already possessed by the spirit of the lover he has abandoned, Bose arrives at the far-flung Narmada guest house singing in a strange, haunting voice: "Bring me my oil and my collyrium/Sister, bring me my mirror and vermillion/Make haste with my flower garland/ My lover waits impatient in the bed," desperately seeking release. This, the third story in the sequence of the novel, recounts Bose's systematic seduction by Rima, an indigenous woman, a member of a remote tribe who has antecedents in the nagas, and whose ruling deity is the snake goddess. The tribe is still extant in the northeastern belt of India. Many from the tribe are migrant workers and frequently find employment in the tea-estates in Assam. The story traces Bose's transformation from a disciplined bachelor and conscientious manager with an empathy for his workers who spends his spare hours in the pursuit of Hindu philosophy, to an insensitive, greedy, lustful, petty despot by day, who guzzles great quantities of alcohol and gives in to unbridled lust after sundown with the tea-picker Rima. His biggest flaw however, is abandoning Rima who falls in love with him. Unrequited love and the scorn of a man who leaves her without an explanation starts a cycle of revenge, and the victim Rima turns to her serpent goddess for redressing the pain Bose inflicts upon her.

Suggestion is a narrative tool effectively used in the unravelling of Bose's tale. In his first weeks during the twilight hours at the Assamese tea-estate, Bose read the books from his grandfather's trunk assiduously: "I even discovered mythology dealing with the very area in which my tea-estate was situated, legends of a vast underground civilization stretching from these hills all the way to the Arabian Sea, peopled by a mysterious race of half-human, half-serpent." He viewed the tales as anthropology , enjoyed the world of pleasure and learning "guarded by hooded serpents with great gems flashing from their hoods[9]." (114). But the executive undergoes a slow transformation after the visit of his colleague Ashok, from the corporate world of Calcutta, who encourages him to "enjoy" his life, suggesting sexual pleasure as a way to combat his solitary existence in the gardens. Subsequently, Bose is haunted by erotic imaginings and gradually his will to self-destruct is almost predicted: "Once I pulled the Rig Veda from the book shelf, hoping to find a philosophical consolation in it, but the passage I read shocked me, so accurately did it describe my loneliness: 'At first was Death/ That which did mean an utter emptiness/ And emptiness, mark thou, is Hunger's Self.' "

Immediately after this tryst with the *Rig Veda*, Bose is overwhelmed by a restlessness: "For the first time I was lonely. And when I entered my bedroom I felt the massive bed sneering at my unused manhood." Thus begins his nights of delusion in drunken stupor until one night he finds the tea-picker in his bed, and surrenders without a fight in the arms of a girl from the "Naga world". In the cold light of day he recalls "…her small teeth pierced my skin again and again, like the sudden striking of a snake and I heard the hissing of her pleasure

against my throat. But when she left my bed I was already asleep dreaming I still held a creature half serpent in my arms, my sated senses pulling me to the underground world of my grandfather's myths." [10] Abandoned by Bose, when he was promoted to Calcutta, the tea company's head quarters, Rima turns vengeful and appropriates Bose's identity by performing ritual practices and asking a boon from the Naga goddess, that had antecedents in a Tantric cult.[11]

A body of myths from medieval eastern India plays out with interesting parallels, in the story of the possessed executive. Especially in Bengal and Assam there was an increasing popularity of the Sakti cults, rituals and beliefs pivotal to the idea of the powerful female deities. One of the most enduring of these is the myth about the Serpent Goddess Ma Manasa[12], which resided in a vast body of literature known as the *Mangala Kavyas* (twelfth to seventeenth centuries). And it is interesting how this Eastern Indian myth has a mirror image in the western most landscape of India in the Vano tribal rituals (of the Vindhya mountains). Nitin Bose travels a thousand miles, in order to appease the Narmada, with water offerings, and vindicates himself.

The narrative pattern of this Naga myth incorporating both beauty and fear, find unique treatment in the *adivasi* (indigenous) woman Rima's premeditated and systematic strategy of destruction -- first seducing then possessing and, when neglected, attempting to destroy the lover: (121) "Then she seduced me with tribal songs in a language I could not understand so that I heard only the sweetness of the melodies. She told me tales of a great serpent kingdom lying inches beneath the soil. She spoke to me of charms that gave men the strength of elephants in rut and the magic performed during the eclipse of the moon when a man's soul could be captured inside the two halves of a coconut."[13] This crucial detail, the trapping of the spirit of a human being within two parts of a skull or a coconut (a metaphor for the skull, in tantric rituals) is a familiar one among eastern Indian mystics and is the very same ritual employed by a vengeful Rima to "possess" the spirit of her neglectful lover Bose.

This story internalizes two immensely powerful meta-myths: Saivite esoterism and the Manasa myth of the fatal strike of an angry Snake Goddess.The mythical Saivite angle is important primarily because it addresses the issue of gaining   control of other beings or forces through the culture of the body or *kayasadhana* (*Skt*, *kaya*: body, *sadhana*: practice). Known in Assam and Bengal as Nathism, it was essentially a yogic cult with an emphasis on the psycho-chemical process of yoga, with a view to making the body perfect and immutable, and thereby immensely powerful. The ultimate power *Isitva*, to "subdue, fascinate and bewitch," was one of eight powers of Lord Siva, the Lord of Yoga.

The power of the occult is a palpable presence in the novel and the hypnotic, serpent-like spell Bose gradually comes under is also effectively signified: (121) "Swarming like clusters of black bees in the whiteness of her eyes her pupils mesmerized me as her low voice gave substance to the worlds I had dreamed of when reading my grandfather's books." The narrative pattern in the Manasa snake goddess myth comprises conflict,

retribution and reconciliation. Manasa has control of snakes and although her actions are snake-like, she is a goddess who has human form.[14]

In *A River Sutra*, Mehta effectively exploits an obscure connection between two Hindu myths and cleverly coalesces them into one connective narrative. This not only extends the geographical and historical scope of the work, but also recaptures, within the reader's mental process, a "lost directness of apprehension". Thus the two myths-- one centred around Narmada, the river goddess, and the other around Ma Manasa[15], the snake or naga[16] goddess – are employed to transmit the Hindu *paap* and *prayaschitta,* or sin and retribution, concept in a meta-myth framework. Bose, since he has offended the snake goddess must do penance and repent, but since the snake goddess and the river goddess are sisters[17] (being formed by the same father Siva, the Narmada from his perspiration, and Manasa from his imaginary eroticism, *manas*), he is allowed the flexibility to carry out his penance in the waters of the Narmada river. This is where the work reveals an unique treatment of myth, where the sacred (the myth) is imported to the secular sphere to work for the narrative. Thus, the link between the river Narmada and the nagas is used in the novel to reiterate a bond between indigenous tribes who shared similar ritual practices, although they might live in far-flung corners of a vast sub-continent. Saved from aggressive Aryan forays and annihilation by the powerful waters of the river Narmada, the grateful Vano tribals, who lived in the Vindhyas, conferred on the Narmada the gift of annulling the effects of snake-bite, as did their Assamese cousins, in Kamrupa, Kamakhya[18], in the Eastern borders, on the Brahmaputra. The narrator's oblique reference (6) very early in the narrative, to this healing quality of the river is suggestive: "I have often heard pilgrims who have never met a tribal reciting the same evocation one hears from the 'tribals': 'Salutation in the morning and at night to thee, O Narmada/ Defend me from the serpent's poison.' The Vano also believe the goddess cures madness, liberating those who are possessed ,"– thus preempting the Bose episode, and preparing the reader for the unveiling of the dual myth. The mythical tales of Manasa revolve around a male authority figure (for our purposes, Bose, an employer) who scoffs at a goddess or, at the height of his fortune, neglects her. Her vengeance follows and he propitiates the goddess and regains lost ground. Bose, then, returns as a pilgrim to the banks of the Narmada to appease the river goddess who is closely related to the snake goddess, her sister. The narrator foreshadows the event also in the early pages of the narrative, setting the tone for Bose's tale: "Indeed the Vano village deity is a stone image of a half-woman with the full breasts of a fertility symbol." (6)

Here, sacred and secular space overlap constantly, allowing myth to be activated with the evocation of the river, in itself a metaphor of the divine, incorporating in its construct the cosmic concepts of timeless and borderless space. The narrator lays the blueprint for the narrative early, training his sights on the river goddess: "…the bungalow's proximity to the Narmada River was its particular attraction. Worshipped as the daughter of the God Shiva, the river is among our holiest pilgrimage sites. During my tours of the area, I had been further intrigued to discover that the criminal offence of attempted suicide is often ignored if the offender is trying to kill himself in the waters of the Narmada. (2)" For the narrator (who lives in a small cottage, adjoining the guest-

house, and whose gardens lead to a stone terrace overlooking the Narmada, which flows seven hundred feet below, spanning a mile at that point, bank to bank), "the river has become the sole object of my reflections". But the river also has an erotic imaginary in the narrator's psyche as we discover, running parallel to the tale of the young executive. The *vanaprastha*, who mistakenly thinks he has escaped the wheel of desire by retiring to a sacred site finds himself standing in the borderless cross-currents of the sacred and the secular as he meditates on the Narmada. Watching the river in the pre-dawn darkness, the narrator conceptualizes her as a woman "indolently stretching her limbs as she oiled herself with scented oils, her long black hair loosened, her eyes outlined in collyrium." As he witnesses dawn rise and the waters slowly redden, he perceives the river "as a woman painting her palms and the soles of her feet with vermillion as she prepared to meet her lover." By his own admission, as he watches the beauty of the waterfalls on the river, refracting the first rays of the sun, "the legends of the Narmada merged with Nitin Bose's story as I struggled to understand the power of the woman who had enchanted him."(133) Just as the solution to the ageless conundrum of *kama* and *tyaga,* desire and renunciation, appear to lie embedded in the myth of the Narmada, so too seems the absolvement of Bose's transgression.

It is the Narmada that ultimately vindicates Bose of his crime. The river transforms the urbane alcoholic to a penitent pilgrim. Bose's complete surrender to the river goddess and his devotion in carrying out the rituals (which include the fashioning of a clay image of the river goddess and its subsequent immersion in the waters of the Narmada, as a signifier of sins drowned), connect the two interrelated spaces of myth and its enactment in secular life. Bose's embrace of the clay image of the goddess before immersing it in the Narmada is one of the most memorable moments in the novel. By virtue of the effortless alignment of subject (Bose), object (the reader) and link (the narrator) the reader is enabled to experience the sublime through the simple act of worship. No Brahmin is needed here to endorse the offerings: "…he [Bose] put his arms around the idol, lifting it from the ground. Holding the idol he walked into the water. The tribals waded in behind him, their hands raised, their faces turned to the West. The mud idol began to disintegrate in the current and we watched fragments of the image being swept downstream – a broken arm, a breast, torn garlands spinning in the water, as they were carried towards the clay lamps floating in the darkness at the river's bend…Nitin Bose immersed the idol in the river chanting 'Salutations in the morning and at night to thee, O Narmada/Defend me from the serpent's poison."(139). At the end of the executive's story there is a cusp of a beginning and an end, a sense of lost innocence that carries within it an unuttered glimmer of hope. In our final encounter there is still a tension between choice and compulsion, and we are left with an ambivalence, where we might have expected concrete answers. Because myth eludes a pegging-down-to-reality and constantly evolves, Bose's story is made universal. Even without the foregrounding of the Hindu pantheon of Manasa, Narmada and Siva, the archetype of sin and transgression appeals to humanity as a whole, and is not culture specific. *A River Sutra* leaves us contemplating upon the wide and contradictory forces that are the stuff of myths, and the only abiding truth the novel agrees to reveals is that human beings, in all their imperfection, are the bridge between the sacred and the secular. It is significant that Mehta prefaces the novel with a couplet from the

great poet-mystic Chandidas: "Listen, O Brother/Man is the greatest Truth/ Nothing beyond." – *Love songs of Chandidas.*

notes

[1] The Narmada is 1,250 km long, rising in Madhya Pradesh state, central India, and flowing west between the Satpura and Vindhya ranges through Gujarat state to the Gulf of Khambat. Because the river is turbulent and confined between steep banks, it is unsuitable for navigation or irrigation. The Narmada, sacred to Hindus, is said to have sprung from the body of the god Siva; a round-trip pilgrimage on foot along its entire length is highly esteemed. Many holy baths and sites line its banks; at Marble Gorge, whose 100-ft-high (30.5-m) walls bear inscriptions and sculptures, is a 12th-century temple dedicated to Siva.

See Sukumari Bhattacharji, *The Indian Theogony: Brahma, Visnu and Siva..(178)* Penguin, 2000: In present day India, Siva is more frequently worshipped in his phallic form than his iconic. Pebbles smoothed by the Narmada are called *Banalinga*, phallic emblems of Siva. The cult is traced to the Rig Veda.

[2] Diana Eck, Professor of Compartive Religions at Harvard University argues that Siva manifested himself on earth twelve times as a shattering sheath of light, known as *jyotirlingas,* which are sacred crossing places of the god, and have become the preeminent destinations for countless Hindu pilgrims. The temples along the Narmada are especially sacred for their link with Siva's powerful manifestations. Amarkantak, Mahadeo and Rudra are on the route that is traversed by pilgrims, and is the geographical epicenter of *A River Sutra*.

[3] In the Sanskritic tradition, the *sutradhar* (sutra:thread; dhar: one who holds), like the chorus in Aeschylean or Sophoclean tragedies, is a narrator of events, a commentator on characters and one who holds the plot together.

[4] The four stages of life in Indian philosophy apply to those who follow the householder path. The first stage of life is the student phase called *brahmacharya*. The second stage is known as *garhasthya* during which one marries, raises a family, develops a career and attends to household duties. Stage three, *vanaprashtha* or *aranyaka* begins when one's hair turns gray and the children have grown so they can assume responsibility for the home. The householder and his wife retire to the forest. During the final stage, *sannyasa*, one becomes a renunciate, free from worldly obligations.

[5] Akka Mahadevi, a 12th century nun of the Virasaiva cult from Southern India, left a set of powerful poems about the joy and realization that comes with renunciation of material goods at the *vanaprastha* stage in life, where rituals are no longer important, but reflection is:

Mahadeviyakka:

"Till you've learnt knowledge of good and evil

it is

lust's body,

site of rage,
ambush of greed,

house of passion,

fence of pride,

mask of envy"-- – tr. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (126), verse 104

and again, in another poem:

"With peace, patience, forgiving and self-command

Who needs the ultimate posture?

The whole world becomes oneself…"
 – tr. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva* (128), verse 120

[6] The Upanishads are a series of texts included in the sixth system of Indian philosophy known as Vedanta. Their focus is primarily on the experience of Spiritual Enlightenment--understanding Brahman not as a theoretical construct but through direct experience, and realizing the forces of nature not as objects of worship but as expressions of the universal "Self."

[7] See Irwin Altman and Dalmas Taylor, Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships, Holt, New York, 1973; also M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Michael Holquist (ed), Caryl Emerson and Holquist (trans), University of Texas, Austin, 1981.

[8] See Antoinne Burton, London and Paris through Indian Spectacles: Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers in fin-de-siecle London, *History Workshop Journal*, 42, (1996).

[9] See David Smith, *Dance of Siva: Religion, Art and Poetry in South India*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996. Smith's translation of the Tamil poet-saint Umapati's composition of the *Cidambara Mahatmya,* where he describes the "erotic ascetic" Siva sculpting a bracelet of a bejeweled naga (like the one Bose reads about), for his arm*:* "The snake rushing at Him/ a gem blazing on its hood/the god made a bracelet/on His auspiciously marked hand*".*

[10] See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (94-95), Doubleday New York, 1965: "The Naga deities—represented by snake idols [indigenous deities in assam and South of the Vindhyas] of various shapes and sizes on a plinth usually at some distance from the shrines of the main (Brahmin) deities, or under specific trees in the village—are chiefly deities of fertility and the life-cycle. They are also installed in the vriksha-vivaha mandapam , i.e. the tree marriage platform, a platform erected around two inter-twined trees, which are fairly frequent all over India, which women circumambulate in …in order to remove sarpa-dosa, the curse of barenness, a curse incurred by harming a snake—either directly or indirectly."

[11] According to Philip Rawson, *The Art of Tantra*, Thames and Hudson, 1973, U.K., many sacred ritual artifacts survive as anthropological evidence to show how pervasive and extensive the Naga cult was, and still is, in India, from pre-Aryan centuries.Of the many archaeological pieces, two specific examples in Rawson's study support the Naga antecedents of Rima—first, the wooden sculpture of a yogini with serpentine energy manifesting from her yoni, South India, C1800; and, second, a chased brass and carved stone emblem depicting a five-hooded serpent enclosing a stone emblem of the original egg-lingam, South India c1900.

[12] See Manasi Das Gupta and Mandakranta Bose, "The Goddess-Woman nexus in popular religious practice, the cult of Manasa", (148-149), (ed. Mandakranta Bose), *Faces of the Feminine in Ancient, Medieval and Modern India. Oup, New Delhi (2000).*

[13] See Shashibhushan Das Gupta, The Religion of the Nath Siddhas (195-196), Obscure Religious Cults, Firma, Calcutta, 1945: "All the myths surrounding Nathism are permeated with a spirit of supernaturalism more in the form of display of magical feats and sorcery by the Siddhas, than by gods and goddesses. In the history of Indian religions, occultism is associated with religious beliefs and practices from the time of the Atharva Veda, and is hence associated with all esoteric religious systems in the Hindu and Buddhist schools. Patanjali, the great propounder of yoga, who dealt primarily with the psychological aspect of yoga, also devoted a full chapter of the yoga sutras to the different kinds of supernatural powers, attributed to Siva himself.

[14] See Edward C. Dimock, "The Goddess of Snakes in Medieval Bengali Literature", *Sound of Silent Guns and other Essays, OUP, New Delhi, 1989.*

[15] According to Dimock: "Manasa is believed to have been born from the erotic imaginings of Siva and his seed fell on a lotus leaf and seeped into the underworld kingdom of Nagas, or serpents, where it took the shape of a girl, named Manasa, since her origin was in Siva's mind.

Mantazur Rahman Tarafdar*, *Hussain Shahi Bengal 1494-1534 AD*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1965, points out in some versions Siva is Manasa's mentor and imparts to her the mysterious powers of life and death.

[16] See Eva Rudy Jansen, *The Book of Hindu Imagery*, Binkey Kok, Diever, Holland, 1993: "The Naga, in Hindu mythology, is the symbol of the eternal cycle of timeand immortality; in Southern Indian states it is also a symbol of fertility."

[17] See John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, Oriental Books, 1973: "The nagas are said to be a semi-divine being, having a human face with the tail of a serpent, and are the peoples of the underworld, where they reign in great splendour. Their dominion, when taken by the *gandharvas* (assistants to the gods), was recovered by their sister Narmada, the river. Their women were handsome and inter-married with men, as seen in Arjuna's union with Ulupi in *The Mahabharata*.

[18]See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (86-87), Doubleday, New York, 1965: Kamakhya is considered a Sakta pitha, a place of pilgrimage where one of Sati's limbs or body parts are believed to have fallen, after Siva had cut the dead body of his wife in his dance of anger, *tandava nritya.* The places where pieces of Sati's body fell are said to have become holy seats or resorts of the great goddess.

Also see D.C. Sircar, The Sakta Pithas, Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1948: Kamakhya is where Sati's yoni, or the female organ of regeneration had fallen.

HYPERTEXTUAL JEALOUSY –THE OPTION OF NON-LINEARITY IN ROBBE-GRILLET'S NOVEL
martin **zeilinger**

"Wasn't writing the realm of the Truth? Isn't the Truth clear, distinct, and one? But"

> from Helene Cixous' "Coming to Writing." in Mary/Shelley, & Herself's *Patchwork Girl* ("conception")[1]

"I am made up of a multiplicity of anonymous particles, and have no absolute boundaries. I am a swarm."

> 'the text,' in *Patchwork Girl* ("self swarm")

"Il est d'ailleurs question d'un navire (un grand navire blanc) et non de voiture."
> *La Jalousie*, (216)

Beginning with Aristotle, a continuous procession of critical thinkers has argued that narrative, essentially made up of plot and story, requires a sequence, i.e. a beginning, a direction, and an end. This tradition has not ended with modern theorists such as Benjamin, Kermode, or Brooks, even though more recently some have granted that *story endings* need not necessarily be provided by the text directly: Where the plot-line ends, we, the readers, take over and infer 'closure,' as it were. An ending in the physical sense of the word, however, is conventionally still seen as indispensable. The whole telling preceding the physical closure is, as Frank Kermode put it, "in terms of the impending end" (Kermode 1967, 52).[2] He sees this connection between the main body of a text and its ending as of utter importance, and defines closure as one of the key pleasures of reading, as well as the textual feature that is most important for providing cohesion and significance. This 'sense of an ending' (thus is the title of his seminal book) of course presupposes a sequence, which in turn reinforces traditional notions of print's inherent physical linearity, and thus a linear reading experience. The claim is, in other words, that in order to be able to identify an ending, and thus to understand a text, one has to be certain (at any moment) about where to begin, which route to take, and where to eventually arrive.

Yet long before narratologists began probing and penetrating their respective bodies of work, writers of fiction had already begun experimenting with theoretical and philosophical conceptions of textuality and readership which were concerned with *co-authorship* rather than "Disneyite laurels of perceived firstpersonhood" (Joyce 1995, 193). Cortázar, Sterne, Joyce, Borges, Calvino, Dos Passos, or Döblin come to mind. Brecht's

'Verfremdung,' Eco's writings on the "open work," Paul Auster's hypertextual detectives, Queneau's eternal sonnet, or William S. Burroughs' 'cut-up' experiments continue this list, but are by no means completing it. Lacking the *technical* profundity and equipment to manufacture (in a very literal sense of the word) the narrative constructs they envisioned, these writers already composed texts which incorporate many of the theoretical underpinnings of what contemporary literary theory today often refers to as 'hyperfiction,' that is, of literary hypertexts. The one impassable difference that remained between these proto-hypertexts and their contemporary counterparts, at least for the time being, was the fact that all these texts were still bound to the page, to print's inherent physical and visual linearity and uni-directionality.[3] The assistance that today might be provided by technical tools of interaction, back then had to be thought of as a task to be accomplished by the reader's imagination.

Alain Robbe-Grillet, I believe, was one of these precursors of hypertextual composition, and experimented with ways of writing and reading that are highly reminiscent of electronic literary hypertexts such as Michael Joyce' famous *afternoon, a story* (1987), or Shelley Jackson's equally influential *Patchwork Girl* (1995). In analogy to "Persse McGarrigle's" relatively daring fictional scheme of a dissertation on 'Eliot's influence on Shakespeare' in David Lodge's *Small World*, in what follows I intend to read Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* (1957) in the context of some contemporary literary theory dealing with more recent works of (hyper)fiction. Relying on this theoretical framework and one prominent example of electronic hyperfiction, I will put forward a few general remarks on the nature of electronic hyperfiction, and examine concepts of non-sequenciality and non-linearity in Robbe-Grillet's *La Jalousie* as compared to Jackson's novel.

Before I embark on this project, however, a few lines on plot and structure of *La Jalousie* might help to (re)familiarize readers with this extraordinary work of fiction. Set on a banana plantation in an unspeficied colony (which is ruled by an unspecified colonial power), we seem to witness the love/hate triangle that is constituted by a nameless married couple (the 'husband' and 'A…') who inhabit the plantation, and a neighbor who lives not to far from them, regularly comes to visit, and takes out A… on trips to the nearby town. The relative monotony of a particular series of daily chores and social activities governs everyday life: Native workers come to work on the plantation; Meals are prepared by a servant; The neighbor pays one of his frequent visits; Drinks are consumed on the patio, etc. These events are framed by more abstract, yet equally repetitive incidents: The sun casts its shadows from different positions; Moths circle the lamp on the patio; A book referred to as 'the African novel' is read and discussed; A native song is heard; A centipede crawls up the wall and is crushed by a boot. Both the premise and the outcome of the story are rather ambiguous, and the apparent absence of a subjective narrative authority furthermore disorients readers willing to identify with a narrator or one of the characters. The most remarkable feature of *La Jalousie* is thus its formal structure, representative of much of Robbe-Grillet's ideas concerning the *Noveau Roman* and what has often been called 'objective style of writing.' The story is told in a series of sequences that are best described as *tableaux*, or as what Barthes and Theodor Nelson called *lexias*.[4] Progress in the plot is made known to readers by changes of scenery and by

extremely meticulous descriptions (always in the present tense) of varying constellations of characters, items, light, etc. within certain tableaux, so that a 'story' in the conventional sense can only be inferred. The general absence of descriptive adjectives in the text makes it furthermore hard to detect subjective perspectives in the narration, and 'personal' investment of the narrator in the story. In rounding up this very tentative description of Robbe-Grillet's formal and stylistic choices in *La Jalousie*, I want to emphasize, again, that they necessitate ways of accessing his text that are very similar to the demands of contemporary literary hypertexts, and refer to more detailed discussions of these modes of interaction that will follow en suite.

Hypertextual writing is often described as something that inhabits (and constructs) virtual, multi-dimensional spaces. Evidently, readers of conventional (print-)novels are often required to read these texts as approximating similar (intellectual) spaces. This assertion is analogous to well-known descriptions of Robbe-Grillet's prose: The relative two-dimensionality and 'timelessness' of single text-tableaus – which is so characteristic of his writing, and which readers have to combine and interpret in a manner in which not only perspective or framing, but also *temporality* figures – is an important feature of both Robbe-Grillet's *Nouveau Roman* and of contemporary hyperfiction.

Hypertext theorist Jane Y. Douglas writes that in Robbe-Grillet's fictional work, "closure in the conventional sense has been displaced" (Douglas 1994, 163). If we thus, however, no longer know where (and how) texts end, does this imply that *sequence*, too, is displaced, and opened up to variant readings? Undoubtedly, we make sense of *La Jalousie* not just based on expectations prompted by events in the text, but by assuming a more active role, a more alert state of readership. The text demands active realization on the readers' part of the subversion of conventional concepts of narrative, novel, and story. This results in what hypertext theorists such as George Landow call practices of 'active' or 'aggressive' reading: Re-reading, reassembling, rearrangement, co-authorship – in short, interaction with the text. Even Frank Kermode, however conservative his take on Robbe-Grillet's writings may seem today, talks of the 'unexpectability' of the novels (especially of *Dans le labyrinthe*). He grants Robbe-Grillet – rather unwillingly, if I read him correctly – partial success in an "attempt at a more or less Copernican change" of the reader/writer relationship (23), and says that "Certainly, there is no temporality, no successiveness" (21). This already suggests a question I will pose again and deal with in more detail later on: In talking about Robbe-Grillet's prose, why would we have to insist on sequence and linearity in the conventional sense of the terms, apart from the sequence that the physical nature of printed text 'naturally' prescribes?

In view of the lamentable obscurity that still defines 'hypertext' in many academic circles that are not specializing in this field, it seems appropriate to continue with a brief – and necessarily deficient – definition of what literary hypertext is, or rather, of what it can be. I will avoid technical considerations and terminology, and focus on pertinent theoretical aspects by working a reading of one representative hyperfiction into my definition. The story I want to use for this is, as already mentioned above, the electronic hypertext *Patchwork Girl* by

Shelley Jackson. The novel – very much in the fashion of many hyperficitons – actually indicates a troika of "authors:" "Mary/Shelley & Herself." This refers to 1) Mary Shelley, author of the famous *Frankenstein*, one of the most central intertexts to *Patchwork Girl*, 2) Shelley Jackson, the 'real' author, if you will, and 3) "Herself", which refers to both Patchwork Girl, the main character of the text, but in the first place indicates the reader. Published in 1995, at a time when "Storyspace" – the computer program required to access the text – was still in development, *Patchwork Girl* displays an immense degree of complexity and depth. Summing up its plot in a few lines is of course entirely impossible, since it must be in the very nature of any non-linear text that no two reading experiences can ever be quite the same. A summary, then, is conceivable only if one takes refuge (as I will now) in an intensely abstract and superficial mode of description: The text communicates the story of the Patchwork Girl, a 'monster' very much like her literary ancestor created by Dr. Frankenstein. *Patchwork Girl* (the text) consists of five main sections which can be explored independently, but which intersect and meet in numerous instances. In the course of an extensive reading, we will very likely[5] come across: Narratives of the lives of the women whose body parts now make up the Patchwork Girl; the fictional author/creator's journal telling the story of Patchwork Girl's (the monster's) creation and their relationship thereafter; a so-called 'quilt' of mostly non-fictional (theoretical) lexias; and two sections containing a multiplicity of other small stories and fragments of stories which can be linked up with the meta-narrative in a great number of ways, but which do not significantly alter our reading experience.

What makes *Patchwork Girl* such a good example of hyperfiction is that it both *unifies and fragments* the different narratives it consists of. Many single lexias are of a highly ambiguous nature, and can be read as 1) critical reflections of the monster on her fragmented self, 2) the creator's reflections on her creation, 3) the author's reflections on *Patchwork Girl* as a text, and 4) general reflections of 'text' on itself. The basic premise of the story should be enough to give a good impression of the never-ending possibilities of always simultaneously theorizing 'text,' 'self,' and interpersonal relations while keeping on telling the coherent fictional story. In addition to this, the imagery most likely used in describing a monster that is sewn together from disembodied limbs and organs has an explanatory function in furthermore elucidating the nature of hypertext.

Hypertext – like *La Jalousie* – grants readers a high degree of 'authority' by expanding their readerly privileges and the ways in which they can interact with the text, or even by abandoning the very notion of an authorial hegemony. A literary hypertext 'knows' about, allows, and calls for its own deconstruction, restructuring, and subjective re-assembling. Classical author/reader distinctions are blurred, and the two categories merge. Hypertext thus does away with many of the negative characteristics of printed text that theorists like Barthes, Derrida, or Vilém Flusser have variously pointed out: Whereas linear representations of texts are said to be authoritative, fundamentalist, hierarchical, oppressive, static, or prescriptive, hypertext seems democratic, experimental, flexible, open, and "all piecemeal and make-it-yourself" (*Patchwork Girl*, "graveyard"). To many readers, of course, the necessity of reading tools such as computers and special software makes hyperfiction

neo-elitist rather than 'democratic.' Also, theorists such as Robert Coover have long started to question the "liberalisation of the reader" which hypertext has supposedly brought about (or forced onto their readers).[6] In this discussion, aspects such as the feelings of security which conventional texts offer, the readerly desire to be guided through a text, and the absolute freedom of readers that is not related, after all, to the physical reality of a text, are very important. Nevertheless, claims that hypertext represents a shift in human consciousness comparable only to the shift from orality to print do not seem all too fantastic.[7]

Ideally, hypertext allows for an indefinite number of links to/from any lexia. Just as 'story connections' in printed texts often have to be assumed and imagined by the reader, these hyperlinks do not have to be visible, and their position and direction often has to be inferred. This can result in an aesthetic effect that is commonly referred to as 'disorientation,' that is, disorientation of readers as to 'where they are' in a text, and how they can get to where (they think) they want to go at any given point in a reading. It is noteworthy that this is achieved not by a restriction/limitation of readers' privileges, but by giving them more power over the text.

Like most 'serious' literary hypertexts, *Patchwork Girl* and *La Jalousie* consist not only of fiction, but also of non-fictional lexias, corresponding to both the story they convey and to theoretical aspects. They are thus texts about the identities of their main characters just as much as about the identities of text itself. In *Patchwork Girl*, for example, the protocols and structural possibilities of hypertext (fragmentation, multiplicity, non-linearity, pastiche, etc.) are mirrored in the scarred physique of the protagonist. Sewing, quilting, and piecing-together refer both to the creation of Patchwork Girl and the creation of a hypertext. This self-reflexivity, again also omni-present in *La Jalousie*, has come to be seen as one of the main characteristics of the form.

If we question – as the *theorist* Robbe-Grillet suggests – an immediate and absolute meaning of things that is either symbolic or assigned to them by evaluative and subjective description, we should question these modes of signification in *La Jalousie* itself. Obviously, Robbe-Grillet's *modus operandi* is not to question and eventually eradicate the notion of the *one* meaning that we are supposed to detect in any text, but rather to open his narrative up to multiple interpretations. (Cf. his writings on intentionality, and of course subjectivity).

La Jalousie, even if it *can* be read as a basically linear text, does not prescribe, I maintain, a certain sequence, in other words it does not demand that we perceive a certain sequence in order to understand the story. On the contrary, the novel allows for multiple entrances and exits: In retrospect, we realize that while we read, we automatically jumble up and re-arrange the original sequence of the novel, and thus co-author a good deal of the text. This, of course, does not forestall 'understanding,' and does not produce a distorted, *wrong* version.

The reason why Robbe-Grillet 'distanced' himself from the text the way he did (I am referring again to his so-called 'objective style of writing') might then be in order to allow for a large number of virtual versions of *La Jalousie* – in order to avoid the feeling that 'there is something that this text *really* means, and that we have to

find out what that is.' The notion that this 'something' is always already in a text – encoded and hidden by an author, and to be decoded and understood exactly the way the author wished – is misleading and eventually limits the potential of any text. The given (physical) sequence of *La Jalousie*, then, can of course serve as the basis for any reading, yet it is potentially also restricting. Looking at the many intra-textual variations of, for example, episodes such as the one about "the African novel" in *La Jalousie*, or the native song, or the centipede, we have to concede that different readerly versions (based on the variable linearity of the episodes' sequence) never fundamentally change the events of the plot, but only, if at all, very subtly interfere with their proportions and relations. I see the pre-set sequence as only one option, and argue that if Robbe-Grillet wanted to direct us to *the one* way through his textual labyrinth, he could (and would) have made it a lot easier for everybody. What would be the point, to put it very plainly, of jumbling up a text, if all we are supposed to find out about it is its supposedly *original*, *real* sequence and structure?

I can think of two conceivable reasons for the manner in which Robbe-Grillet structured *La Jalousie*: One is that the neighboring passages signify something because of the exact arrangement they are put in. The other is that the boundaries and borders of the episodes are blurred, and the necessary reconstruction on the readers' part results in different (desired) variants. Undoubtedly, the framing of the different lexias is very significant (e.g. the expansive sexual undercurrents in the recurring centipede passages). But does the pre-set sequence make it easier for us to see what the corresponding centipede passages 'really mean,' or is it rather that the given framing of the passages and our belief in the significance of this make us *infer* these specific meanings? Reading *La Jalousie* as a hypertext, I get ever more careful and cautious about assumed fixed meanings. At which point does a popular reading become normative; At which point does a possible reading turn into the one accepted (canonical) reading? Ultimately, even the meanings that these sections facilitate through their pre-set framing and order are only perceivable through active reflection, re-reading, and comparison – in other words: through a basically *hypertextual* manner of reading. The second possible explanation for *La Jalousie*'s structure given above seems, therefore, more appropriate. It is less exclusive, and does not rule out the first assumption.

Robbe-Grillet realizes a redefinition of author/reader-relationships by constructing an narrator who gives away a lot of his authorial control, and who does not direct the reader through the text in a conventional way. His project in *La Jalousie*, then, is not simply to remove, to some extent, the narrator's personality from the text (which would be a questionable notion in itself), but to remove the traditional personality of the *author* as an authoritative and directing centre of power. His refusal to subjectively inform his texts with prefixed singular 'meaning' (or to let his characters do so) thus forces – or enables – us as readers to quasi-assume this task. (The *narrator's* personality, meanwhile, is, as any alert reader will be aware of, not absent at all, even though his presence is disguised by Robbe Grillet's unorthodox stylistic choices.)

'The garden of forking paths,' to use this familiar phrase, is a very good metaphor both for the basic concept of

non-linearity in literary hypertexts and in *La Jalousie*. Every turn on the many paths through the text, every new page, paragraph, even sentence, has potential to disorient us spatially, temporally, and in terms of content. New possibilities occur (and occur to us) again and again, make us reflect on past passages, and thus force us to actively choose our very own route through the story. The narrative "semble d'une grande complication. Il est très difficile d'y suivre dans leurs emmêlements les différentes mèches: plusieurs solutions conviennent, par endroit, et ailleurs aucune" (*La Jalousie*, 52). Hypertext theory defines non-linearity in narratives as the multi-directional linking up of single text units. Such a unit "is best conceived as an arbitrarily long string of graphemes, identified by its relation to the other units as constrained and separated by the conventions or mechanisms of their mother text" (Aarseth, 60). Links can work either serially (linearity is then understood as a special form of non-linearity), or in a genuinely non-linear fashion. They do not have to be visually demarcated, and their number as well as their boundaries can fluctuate and are subject to changes, depending on the perceptiveness of the readers. Furthermore, non-linearity in fictional texts can of course only be observed in the comparison of at least two readings, since each individual reading – viewed in isolation - must of course always appear linear. On the whole, it follows that hypertext does not necessarily have to be realized electronically, and can be found in the printed pages of traditional books.

Non-linear narrativity is not, of course, a concept invented by novelists. It is adopted, rather, from customary human behavior: In order to make sense of their individual life stories, 'characters' will – like readers of a novel – always rearrange and reconstruct their lives in a way similar to how one reconstructs the plot of a film in telling somebody about it. A closer look might reveal that this is just what the narrator in *La Jalousie* does, too. There is no guarantee for the accuracy of his account of the events. The temporal non-linearity of his accounts is a strong hint pointing at his subjectivity, and possible 'irregularities' in his story. After all, what the nameless narrator (we infer that he is the "husband") does, is trying to make sense of the plot's events in retrospect – in his memory, and thus subjectively. So a text like *La Jalousie* can be seen as a system in which, quoting Aarseth, "all the parts are known, but the full potential of their combinations is not" (Aarseth, 57). Naturally, a final readerly version of the story can thus differ greatly in different readings, depending on how much power and freedom readers are granted, and depending on the extent to which readers make use of that freedom. These rearranged versions, however, do not result in essentially different texts – like different segments of *La Jalousie*, they are merely manifestations of different perspectives.

The text, then, is a fully functioning, self-contained system – a labyrinth, hermetic, yet open, and including uncertainties and variables. I already suggested that in *La Jalousie*, the realization of the need for non-linear reading practices (i.e. ways of re-combining sequences) might only surface in the course of a reading, or even in retrospect. We will feel compelled to re-read passages, to compare and interpret them (and then revise our interpretations), or even to scan through as yet unread passages, looking for hints concerning the structure ("meaning") of what we have already read. The different ways in which the text can be accessed, used, and wandered through might be preconceived, but they are not prescribed by the author. In comparison to

Patchwork Girl, which is a non-linear narrative because it requires us to find our personal way through the text, we might thus call *La Jalousie* a *recursive* non-linear text, in that it demands a retroactive acknowledgement of its non-linearity.

Like *Patchwork Girl*, *La Jalousie* exists 'outside of time.' Robbe-Grillet himself emphasized this repeatedly both in *Pour un nouveau roman* and in *Generative literature and generative art*. The text describes moments in time, rather than the constant successive flow of one scene into another. Characters (and likewise their opinions) do not perceptibly develop or move in the text, but rather change position 'while we are not looking.' We might be, for example, allowed a glance through the main character A…'s bedroom-window, and see a certain arrangement of objects and a certain play of light on the floor and walls. In the diegesis of *La Jalousie*, such a readerly gaze does not carry meaning in itself. To be able to perceive development and thus infer meaning, we will be granted another glance through the window – but something will have changed. I stress here that something will *already have changed* – the new and similarly minute description of the inner arrangement and structure of the *tableau* suggests development, but does not explicitly refer to it. We do not see these changes happen, and therefore do not know if they represents a chronological development, a flashback, or just a momentary shift in the onlooker's position. The absence of a conventional representation of time here presupposes a certain simultaneity of the passages, which in turn implies the potential non-linearity of the text. Temporal re-arrangements of the sections might be necessary, beyond the given sequence of the text. *La Jalousie* thus resists linearity, or, to put it differently, makes us resist it.

The limited number of characters, settings, and recurring events is another interesting point, and has several functions: Most importantly, we are thus enabled to keep 'on top' of the plot. More characters or settings would necessarily involve more explanatory sections (similar to 'establishing shots' in films), which would be counter-productive to Robbe-Grillet's project of 'objective narration.' The limited set of characters, as well as the restricted setting, furthermore work very well as devices allowing us to keep track of the possible combinations of passages, and implications of these combinations for the meaning of the overall text. The repetitive nature of events and their habitual overlaps (e.g. dinner/drinks/conversation/departure) allow for multiple understandings of many of the most reductive and short lexias at any point in the novel. The mentioning of the positions of the sun, to give another example, can be seen as suggesting a sequence, but often these descriptions are spatially set apart from other narrative sections, so that they can be understood as fitting in elsewhere.

As stated above, the issue of non-linearity in *La Jalousie* is closely related to self-reflexivity in the text, a feature that is of great importance in most other literary hypertexts. In the novel, Robbe-Grillet explicitly discusses the structure not only of elements of the text as such, but also of certain fictional elements. The "African novel," the nocturnal sound of the animals, the insects orbiting around the lamp, or the native song are the most important examples. A closer look at any of the isolated narrative passages can provide a sort of self-reflexive 'model

reading' of *La Jalousie*, a metaphorical decipherment of the ways in which the story as a whole is structured and, above all, the ways in which it is told by the narrator. The main character's contradictory oral version – *his* version – of the "African novel" which the other two characters have read, but which he has not read, is one such hint. His version seems very different from theirs: His ways of internally re-arranging the plot seem to result in the same story, which is, however, injected with different, personal, meanings. Perhaps the text we read as "*La Jalousie*" (in its pre-set linearity) is just as much only *a* version, namely the main character's/ narrator's. Even if he sticks to the events truthfully, the way he chooses to arrange them must distort them, and sets them apart from version the other characters would have represented. Here, again, Robbe-Grillet work is reminiscent of many electronic literary hypertexts, whose writers often tend to include 'manuals' for the use of their texts, and weave them into the narrative. These 'manuals' read as a sort of compensation for the lack of control the writers have over the immediate reception of their texts; While handing over a lot of authorial power to the reader, authors seem to feel that they have to give at least some directions, in order to maybe partially re-claim *their* text. I would argue that this self-reflective and directive inclusion of manuals – present in *La Jalousie* as much as in *Patchwork Girl* – is indeed one of the primary characteristics of this open form of fiction-writing.

If one acknowledges and respects the differences between readers, in philosophical, perceptive, and aesthetic terms (as Robbe-Grillet surely did), it would seem a rather arrogant project to write texts for people to simply consume. In *La Jalousie*, then, the writer is no longer the only author, and the reader takes on a role that strikes me as more radical than what Barthes called 'writerly' forms of reading. The eventual consumption of the text in a 'Gadamerian' sense is preceded by practices of combining, rearranging, and manipulating – and "narrative is no longer disseminated irreversibly from singer to listener or writer to reader" (Joyce 1995, 193). I showed, in these last few pages, that in *La Jalousie* Robbe-Grillet breaks with traditional concepts of the necessity of narrative linearity and sequence, and confronts his readers with the alternative of recursive non-linear readings of. I argued that, similar to more recent electronic hyperfiction, *La Jalousie* is conceptualised and realised in a manner that enables, but does not prescribe, a certain linear sequence. Robbe-Grillet's stylistic choices indicate that he in fact tries to deconstruct priorities of certain readings over others. By transgressing the conventional boundaries between theoretical and literary writing, and by blending the formerly distinct forms of writing, Robbe-Grillet lends *La Jalousie* a highly self-reflective note, and offers advice as to how to handle the unorthodox text. He seems to almost urge us to follow him in an experimental handling of the story, and suggests, I think, a greatly increased amount of readerly pleasure to be gained: The intra-textual readers of the African novel, for example, are depicted as essentially hypertextual – and as "échangeant des sourires, s'excitant au jeu, sans doute un peu grisés par cette prolifération..." (*La Jalousie*, 83). Even in the canonical interpretations of *La Jalousie*, ideas about what the logical consequences of the events in the book must be, about what constitutes these events, differ considerably. Concluding that most of these readings are wrong, and that only one of them comes close to what Robbe-Grillet had in mind, is certainly out of the question. As the narrator of the story says himself, many "bifurcations possibles se présentent, on cours de route, qui

conduisent toutes à des fins différentes; Les variantes sont très nombreuses; les variantes des variantes encore plus" (*La Jalousie*, 83). Different readings, we can conclude, are *never* wrong, and especially in texts like *La Jalousie* they might all be equally right. At the (physical) end of a traditional linear text, we may realise that things *could have been* different – but are not. At the end of a hypertext – where closure is defined as "when the experience of reading it ends" (Joyce 1995, 186) – and similarly at the end of *La Jalousie*, we realise that things *are* different.

notes

[1] A note on citations: Since electronic hypertexts are not paginated, I will label quotations with the lexias' titles.

[2] It is important to note that Frank Kermode was mainly concerned with texts that redate modern and certainly postmodern epochs.

[3] Stuart Moulthrop, professor of English and himself a writer of hyperfiction (i.e. the novel *forking paths*), sums up what many scholars agree on: that hypertextual fiction "can be traced in several directions: to contemporary experimentalists like Alain Robbe-Grillet [...] and Julio Cortázar; to theorists of reading like Roland Barthes and Wolfgang Iser; to modernists like Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner; or to an older tradition of narrative eccentricity epitomized by Rabelais, Cervantes, and Sterne" (Moulthrop 1994, 119). It is Jorge Luis Borges, however, whom Moulthrop identifies as the real early master of this form.

[4] Cf. Barthes c1974 and Nelson 1981.

[5] I use the qualifier 'likely' because it is possible that a reading (which would still have to be called 'inclusive') of *Patchwork Girl* could consist of merely fragments of any of these sections.

[6] Cf. Coover 1992 & 1993.

[7] Cf. Landow 1992, chapter 1.

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THE STERILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL ONTOLOGICAL SEARCH VERSUS THE FECUNDITY OF THE RELATIONAL ONTOLOGICAL SEARCH IN SARAMAGO'S
THE YEAR OF THE DEATH OF RICARDO REIS

irene **marques**

First published in 1984, <u>The Year of the Death of Ricardo Reis</u> ('O Ano da morte de Ricardo Reis')[1] by the Portuguese writer José Saramago is a complex and rich novel, which brings to debate many arguments pertaining to the importance of the individual and the artist's engagement in society as well as the duty to find meaning and fulfillment in one's life. The novel revolves around the life, love life, ontological and epistemological search of Ricardo Reis, a doctor by profession and a poet. Ricardo Reis is not a real person: he is merely one of the many heteronyms of the famous Portuguese poet, Fernando Pessoa.[2] In the novel, the Reian character is very much like the original Pessoan character: he is the detached, aloof, fatalistic, neo-classical poet, the politically unengaged figure who lives mostly recoiled within himself and makes little or no real effort to actively participate in life or to connect with people. And, like the original character, he continues to be a lover of the ideal woman: the absent, goddess-like and ethereal Lídia, about whom he writes poems and who he loves only on a platonic level. Although a general practitioner by profession, Reis is for the most part unemployed while living in Lisbon, working only part-time for a few months as a cardiologist (a doctor of the heart)--a very ironic situation--if we take into account the fact that he does not know very much about love and tends to minimize the importance of emotions. The general mood of the novel is dark, gloomy and pessimist. Due to the highly reflective nature of the novel, we often feel enmeshed and pushed into Reis' internal thoughts and way of being and seeing the world: his extreme (almost desperate) loneliness, his lack of personal initiative, egocentric personality, doubtful and schizoid-like identity and personality[3] and existential nihilist view.

The novel starts with Reis' return to Lisbon, after his long exile of sixteen years in Brazil. Being a lover of tradition and conservative political forms (i.e., the monarchy), Reis had left Portugal around 1910, when the Portuguese monarchy was abolished and the first Republic installed, and exiled himself in Brazil. It is now the year of 1936 and Pessoa has just died. Having heard about the death of his creator, Reis decides to return to Lisbon. The Portugal that Reis encounters is not a very pleasant one, for Salazar is now in power, and the country is living under a very oppressive Fascist regime. The city of Lisbon appears to us as a phantomlike place, very much closed off to the rest of the world. It is a city where is rains a lot and which is almost always covered by fog or heavy clouds, as if pointing to the intellectual inebriation (cloudy vision) of the Portuguese people who are now controlled by the highly repressive, fascist political machinery of Salazar's regime—a regime constantly at work to control people's thoughts, needs, wants and ideas.

Apart from the oppressive negative climate in Portugal, the world is also experiencing the most dramatic

political events and oppressive regimes of the twentieth century: the rise of the Nazis in Germany, the success of Fascism in Italy and its war with Ethiopia, and the Civil War in neighboring Spain. By placing Reis in the midst of a society raided by so many socio-political concerns and evils, Saramago is forcing him, one could argue, to reconsider his life philosophy of aloofness, pure intellectualism and un-engagement. How can Reis justify his escape from the socio-historical and material reality, when all he reads about in the newspapers, is pointing out to the many disasters that go on every day, not only in Portugal but also around the world? How can he justify his inaction and apathy when the world is literally killing itself? Is it logical to keep on believing that all that happens is pure fate and the wishes of the Olympian Gods?

Relying primarily on some of Emmanuel Lévinas ethics of relationality and otherness, and Luce Irigaray's reading and critique of Lévinas essay "The Phenomenology of Eros," this paper aims at providing some answers to the following questions: How does Saramago offer a negative critique of the individual ontological search in the persona of its main character, the Pessoan heteronym Ricardo Reis? How are Reis's aloofness, intellectualism, solitude and social disengagement portrayed? And how does such a portrayal serve to demonstrate that humans ought to be inserted in what I choose to call the 'phenomenology of life' ("in-the-element," as Lévinas puts it) so that they can find real existential fulfillment and directly engage themselves in the dismantlement of the structures (and myths) that might be at the root of their existential angst? How is Reis' individual ontological search counterposed with Lídia's relational ontological search? As the female protagonist of the novel, Lídia is depicted as being quite the opposite of Reis: engaged, physical and relational—and yes, even better, happier and surer of herself. I will demonstrate how Saramago opposes the sterility of Reis existence to the fecundity of Lídia's life and how such fecundity is achieved through Lídia's insertion in the 'phenomenology of life': in physical/sexual love, in the mere activity of domestic house-cleaning and in the caring for others. In other words, I will illustrate how Lídia's fecundity is linked to the grounding of the body to the spatio-temporal present and realities that require the use of the physical capacities/intelligences and of the senses/emotions--and how such grounding is even depicted as being conducive to the experiencing of a 'real' spiritual ecstasy.

In what constitutes perhaps a typical Saramaguian ironic twist,[4] the Reian ideal, phantom-like, upper class Lídia, constantly evoked in Reis' poetry is counterposed to another Lídia: one of flesh and bone and the maid at the hotel Bragança, where Reis is initially staying. The novel gives us many details not only about Lídia's physical features and how she enjoys the pleasures of the body, but also about what she does, and how she cares for Reis when is ill:

> We already know the maid who brings breakfast, it is Lydia, who also makes the bed and cleans and tidies up the room. […] Lydia must be about thirty years of age, a mature *and nicely shaped* young woman, dark-haired and unmistakably Portuguese, short rather than tall, if there is a point in mentioning the physical traits of an ordinary woman who so far has done nothing but scrub floors, serve

breakfast […]. Ricardo Reis noticed the birthmark at the side [of her] nostril. (68, 69) She put the tray on the table and approached the bed, and quite spontaneously put her hand on his forehead, You have a fever. […]. He placed a hand over Lydia's and closed his eyes, If there are only these two tears, I will be able to keep them back, he thought, holding Lydia's work roughened, almost coarse hand, so different from the hands of Chloe, Neaera, and that other Lydia, and from the tapered fingers, manicured nails, and soft palms of Marcenda. From Marcenda's one living hand, I should say, because her left hand is anticipated death. (141-142) Lydia insisting he take one more spoonful of chicken broth, but he refuses, he has no appetite, he also wants her to plead with him, a game which would seem absurd to anyone on a blissful state of perfect health. To tell the truth, Ricardo Reis is not so ill that he is unable to feed himself […]. (143) Lydia is happy. A woman who goes to bed so willingly with a man is deaf to gossip, let voices slander her in hallways and courtyards. (260)[1]

This time Lídia is a *real* living person who lives in the present and not some *ideal* character from ancient Greece about whom Horace, the Latin poet, has once also written about. She is someone who Reis sees, speaks and interacts with and many levels: sexual, emotional and even intellectual. The fact that Lídia is a maid makes her even a more real and grounded figure: she is someone who continuously works with her body: cleaning, swiping, serving and moving rapidly to perform the many tasks her job requires. Not only does Lídia work with her body literally, in the sense that she uses it in order to earn a living, but she also uses it in the sexual way: she responds to the physical and sexual advances of Reis (and other clients) and enjoys the sexual act for, as she puts it, "this life is so sad" (78) ('esta vida [é] tão triste') (97). Being able to enjoy her own sexuality seems to be for Lídia a way to find relief from the existential nausea and solitude we humans are all bound to experience. In truth, it can be argued that the existential nausea and solitude that constantly assail Ricardo Reis, are tied to the fact that he refuses to fully give into the pleasures of the senses and fails to see that those pleasures might indeed be the door to the fulfillment of the soul.

Contrary to Reis, who merely stares at the world passively, abstractedly and intellectually, and in some ways Marcenda--the upper class educated young virgin with whom Reis is involved mostly on a platonic level--Lídia is grounded in her immediate world and reality. She can be heard, touched and felt by Reis. Lídia is what in Portuguese would commonly be described as the "maid for all services" ('criada para todos os serviços'): she not only cleans Reis' room and serves him breakfast, but she is also the one who gives him what other women have not been able to do: the presence, reality, warmth and ecstasy of physical and emotional love. Yet, the fact that she is the 'maid for all services' is not presented in a negative way in Saramago's novel since she is depicted in many ways not only as a feminine role model but also a role model for Reis himself. Lídia is a self-sufficient and engaged woman who is assertive in her own terms and within the limits of her own society; someone who is not afraid to love an upper class man, even if the latter does not (or cannot) love her fully because he is imprisoned in all kinds of social clichés (pertaining to class and gender) and idealist conceptions of love. Despite her limited formal education, Saramago's Lídia is undoubtedly quite savvy, unconventional and resourceful, and is often depicted as being smarter and more liberated than the educated Ricardo Reis. For example, she seems unconcerned with the fact that she has pre-marital sex and with more than one man

and is even distrustful of the advantages of being a married woman—all uncommon behaviors and reactions for a Portuguese woman living in the highly conventional, patriarchal and religious society of the mid nineteen thirties:

> Do you want me to come and spend my days with you when you have a place of your own, Would you like that, Of course I would, Then you must come, until such time as, Until you find someone of your own station. That was not what I was going to say. When that happens, you need only say to me, Lydia, I don't want you to come anymore. Sometimes I fell I don't really know you. I'm a hotel chambermaid. But your name is Lydia, and you have a curious way of saying things. When people start talking their hearts, as I'm doing now with my head on your shoulder, the words aren't the same, *even I can feel it.* I hope you find yourself a good husband someday. It would be nice, but when I listen to other women, those who say they have good husbands, it makes me wonder. You think they're not good husbands, Not for me, What is a good husband, in your opinion, I don't know, You're hard to please. Not really, lying here without any future, I'm happy with what I have now.[2] (171)

When finding out that she is pregnant, Lídia tells Reis she will have the child and that he does not have to assume any of the emotional, moral or financial responsibilities that that would entail—further signs of her personal strength, identity and capacity to overcome the strong social stigmas associated with single-motherhood. Lídia is in fact given a certain sainthood in Saramago's novel, and one that is counterposed to the religious Christian view of female sainthood and virtuosity, usually requiring one to be chaste and perform sexual acts only within marriage. Despite the fact that Lídia is not chaste in that sense, she is put on a pedestal and even compared to the Virgin Mary--not the ethereal, spiritual and a-physical Virgin Mary, traditionally depicted by the Christian religion--but rather a more realist Virgin Mary, who possesses a body, has sexual desires and is capable of performing her own miracles:

> These are days of bliss. On vacation from her job at the hotel, Lydia spends nearly all her time with Ricardo Reis [...]. (308) The apartment is celebrating Resurrection Saturday and Easter Sunday by the grace and labor of this humble servant who passes her hands over things and leaves them spotless and gleaming, not even in the days of Dona Luísa and the Appeals Court Judge, with a regiment of maids to do the shopping and the cooking, did these walls and furniture shine with such luster, blessed be Lydia among women. Marcenda, were she living here as the legitimate mistress of the household, could not compete, not even with two hands. A few days ago the place smelled of mildew, dust, blocked drains, and now light penetrates, the most remote corners, makes all the glass look like crystal, polishes every surface, the ceiling itself becomes starlit with reflections when the sun enters the windows, a celestial abode, a diamond within a diamond, and it was through menial housework *that these superior, sublime transformations were achieved*. Perhaps also the abode is celestial because of the frequency with which Lydia and Ricardo Reis make love, such is the pleasure in giving and taking, I cannot think what has come over these two that they are suddenly *carnally* so demanding and so generous with their favors. Could it be the summer that is heating their blood, could it be the presence of that tiny ferment in

> her womb, *perhaps the result of a distracted union, the new cause of resuscitated ardors,* the ferment
> is nothing in this world as yet, yet already it has some influence in governing it.[3] (309)

The bliss and greatness that Lídia brings to Ricardo Reis through her household domestic activities, the act of love making, the individual attention, tenderness, care and presence are presented by Saramago as sublime actions for they can achieve great, visible and immediate effects. It is the immediacy of life and the experiences that it gives us (the now and here) that are valued, rather than the remembrance of the past or the speculations about the future. Life is depicted as something which is always happening, always in the present, reason why one must grasp it and enjoy it. It is the physical, emotional and sensual side of Lídia that are seen as great values, values which will lead to spiritual realization and ecstasy: an ecstasy grounded in the immediate and material world. It is through the physical work performed by Lídia that Reis' house becomes alive; it becomes enlightened, sublime, celestial, blessed and blissful; it attains a terrestrial sanctity much grander than any other type of abstract conception of sanctity normally attributed to invisible entities. Lídia is in fact compared to a priestess or a goddess herself: the one who through her magical abilities (of cleaner, lover and care-taker) can transform Reis' house into a sanctuary, or even a cathedral of great beauty and celestial dimensions. She is described as a "diamond within a diamond" (309) ('diamante no interior de diamante') (375), suggesting thus that she is an entity with great strength and powers who possesses the ability to erect her own world. She is the builder of a better world, the maker of a more humane and livable society, the engaged individual who makes life happen, contrary to the highly fatalistic and passive Reis, who mostly stares at the world, just awaiting for his destiny to realize itself.[5]

By contrast, when Lídia's visits to Reis' house become rare and then finally stop, the house becomes lifeless, dark, dirty and difficult to discern, as if it were literally disappearing. Reis himself starts to lose his physicality and identity. Without Lídia's continuous and assiduous presence, Reis starts to fall into nothingness for he has no one to see, hear, touch, feel and smell:

> But now Lydia's vacation is over and everything returns to normal, she will come, as before, once a week on her day off. Now, even when the sun finds an open window, the light is different, weaker, and the sieve of time has started once more to sift the impalpable dust that makes outlines fade and blurs features. When Ricardo Reis turns down the bedcover at night, he barely sees the pillow where he will rest his head, and in the morning he cannot rise without first identifying himself with his own hands, line by line, what he can still find of himself, like a fingerprint partially obliterated by a large, *profound* scar. (309) Having reverted, after Lydia's vacation, to his habit of sleeping practically until lunchtime, Ricardo Reis must have been the last to learn of the military coup in Spain. Blearyeyed, he went to pick up the morning newspaper off his doormat and returned to his bedroom yawning, *one more day that starts, Ah, this long, existential tedium, the pretense of calling it serenity*.[4] (320)

Lídia's presence functioned as an affirmation of Reis' own life, suggesting thus that human identity is always relational, dialectical and intrinsically tied to others, those others who are there acknowledging us and making

us realize (and reflect) on who we are in relation to them. In the words of Lévinas, "[It is] as if, in going towards the other [*L'autre*], I rejoined me and implanted myself in a ground, henceforth my native one, unburdened of all the weight of my identity." (qtd. in Chalier 172). Lídia was Reis' real connection to the world and his own self. Without her, he is unable to stay in touch with the reality of the world and himself. Lídia's absence causes Reis to enter a phase of gradual accelerated self-erasure: he starts to lose his vision, becomes un-alert and even needs to touch his body continuously to make sure it is still there. Alone in the large apartment, and now totally unoccupied, Reis loses track of time and becomes increasingly somnolent. Cut off from the world, and constantly living in his head, he loses himself in himself. His constant sleepiness is related to his inability to create meaning in his life, to make time, so to speak, to relate to the exterior world. As Lévinas suggests in Time and the Other, and in the words of Séan Hand, "time is not the achievement of an isolated subject, but the very relationship which that subject has with the Other" (The Levinas 120). The "serenity" characterizing Reis' life is not really the serenity felt by someone living a peaceful, fulfilled and content existence. On the contrary, it indicates a lack, an emptiness, a void, an anxiety, reason why Saramgo refers to it as "tedium"--a tedium which can only be diminished by the self's emersion into phenomenological reality, "in-the-element," into relational and purposeful enterprises.

Reis's decision to move into a large, old apartment by himself is the first sign that he is domed to end up alone and erase himself into nothingness. While at the hotel Bragança, he had the presence of other people around him (i.e., the waiter, the manager, other guests) who would talk to and acknowledge him, and who in fact became almost like his family, his relations. Put differently, he had the presence of the other Is who served as exterior entities which reminded him that he was indeed a subject, an I in contact with other Is. In opposition to the hotel where people existed, laughed, spoke and could be seen in all their physical and immediate manifestations, Reis' newly rented apartment is an empty, big entity, an impersonal site, where he can only hear the noises created by his own movements, the echo of his own voice or other impersonal sounds associated with domestic life:

> Here is the apartment, spacious, adequate for a large family, furniture made of dark mahogany, an enormous bed, a tall closet, a fully furnished dining room, a sideboard, a credenza for silver or china according to one's means, an extending table, and the study paneled with maple, the desk covered with green baize like a billiard, threadbare in one corner, and a kitchen, and a bathroom rudimentary but adequate. Every item of furniture was bare, empty, not a single utensil, dish, ornament, no sheets or towels, The last tenant was an old woman, a widow, who has gone to live with her children and taken all her belongings, the place is to be let with only the furniture you see here. (175-176) The apartment filled with noises, the running of water, the vibration of the pipes, a tapping sound from the meter, then gradually silence was restored. […] he finally said loud, like a message he must not forget, I live here, this is where I live, this is my home, this, I have no other, and suddenly he felt fear, the terror of a man who finds himself in a deep cave and pushed open a door that leads into the darkness of an even deeper cave, or to a void, an absence, a nothingness, the passage to nonbeing. Removing his raincoat

and jacket, he realized the apartment was cold.[5] (186)

Even the streets surrounding the apartment are empty, desolate, only a few people looking at the sky and the few ships at the port, as if reminiscing about the Portuguese early empire when great wealth would regularly arrive at the Tejo shore in many ships, reminiscing and failing to live in the present and find happiness in their immediate surroundings, just like Reis: "He returned to the front of the apartment to look out at the grimy bedroom window at the deserted street. There stood Adamastor, livid against the dull clouds, a giant raging in silence. Some people are watching the ships, they look up from time to time as if expecting rain, and seated on the bench, the two old men lost in conversation."[6] (186)[6]

Reis often receives visits from his creator, the dead Fernando Pessoa, further suggestions that he is mostly immersed in his own self: his ego and his self are constantly confronting each other—a sign that Reis is involved in an individual ontological search. When the ego and the self are left confronting each other for too long, the self runs the risk of losing its identity—which is what happens to Reis. While at the hotel, and when with Lídia, Reis had been able to exit his own self, he had been able to find (recognize) himself through others: his ego had been reassured of its existence, outside of the self. While immersed in relationships, Reis was in the arena of sensibility, immediacy, phenomenological apprehension; he was living rather than merely thinking (or reflecting); he was in the Levinasian "element":

> To-be-in-the-element does indeed disengage a being from blind and deaf participation in a whole, but differs from a thought making its way outward. […] It is to be within, to be inside of…. This situation is not reducible to a representation, not even an inarticulate representation; it belongs to sensibility, which is the *mode* of enjoyment. It is when sensibility is interpreted as representation and mutilated thought that the finitude of our thought has to be invoked so as to account for these "obscure" thoughts. […] One does not know, one lives sensible qualities: the green of these leaves, the red of this sunset. […] Sensibility, essentially naïve, suffices to itself in a world insufficient for thought. (135) Sensibility establishes a relation with the pure quality without support, with the element. […] Sensibility is not an inferior theoretical knowledge bound however intimately to affective states: in its very *gnosis* sensibility is enjoyment; it is satisfied with the given, it is contented. Sensible "knowledge" does not have to surmount infinite regression, that vertigo of the understanding; it does not even experience it. It finds itself immediately at the term; it concludes, it finishes without referring to the infinite. […] finition without limitation […]. (136) This earth upon which I find myself and from which I welcome sensible objects or make my way to them suffices me. The earth which upholds me does so without my troubling myself about knowing what upholds the earth. I am content with the aspect this corner of the world, universe of my daily behavior, this city or this neighborhood or this street in which I move, this horizon within which I live, turn to me; I do not ground them in a more vast system. (TI 137)

As many have argued,[7] Levinas did not directly extend his "sensibility" and his "be[ing]-in-the-element" to erotic, sexual love, and, in fact, saw this type of love as "profanation" (259), "animality" (259), "violation" (260),

"indecency," "lasciviousness", "pleasure and dual egoism" (263) and as "a return to oneself" (TI 266). In her 'correction' of Levinas' "Phenomenology of Eros" as depicted in Totality and Infinity, Luce Irigaray extends the Levinasian "sensibility" and the "being-in-the-element" to erotic love. In fact, she sees non-possessive, inter-relational erotic love between a man and a woman as the fountain of divinity, infinity and dwelling; as the site where subjectivity erases itself, but where it also finds the space to be reborn, born in difference. This difference allows the man and the woman to maintain their otherness, and at the same time, continuously discover/rediscover each other and themselves in each other's bodies (borders). As she very nicely puts it in "The Fecundity of the Caress,"

> Before orality comes to be, touch is already in existence. No nourishment can compensate for the grace or work of touching. Touch makes it possible to wait, to gather strength, so that the other will return to caress and reshape, from within and from without, a flesh that is given back to itself in the gesture of love. The most necessary guardian of my life is the other's flesh. Approaching and speaking to me with his hands. Bringing me back to life more intimately than any regenerative nourishment, the other's hands, these palms with which he approaches without going through me, give me back the borders of my body and call me to the remembrance of the most profound intimacy. […]. Both fulfilling the cycles of their solitude to come back to other, wounded perhaps, but free for a possible return because of the pardon that each gives. Allowing each other to become detached from and the other. […]. Touching can also place a limit on the reabsorption of the other in the same. Giving the other her contours, calling her to them, amounts to inviting her to live where she is without becoming other, without appropriating herself. […]. To give back to the other the possible site of his identity, of his intimacy: a second birth that returns one to innocence. […]. Dwelling with the self, and with the other—while letting the other go. […]. A kind of house that shelters without enclosing me, untying and tying me to the other, as to one who helps me to build and inhabit. […]. That which is reborn and, again and again, around a memory of the flesh. […]. Scent or premonition between my self and the other, this memory of the flesh as the place of approach means ethical fidelity to incarnation. To destroy it is to risk the suppression of alterity, both God's and the other's. Thereby dissolving any possibility to access to transcendence (An Ethics 185-217)

The "Phenomenology of Eros" as described and understood by Irigaray is, as we have already shown, enough for and appreciated by Lídia. She loves to make love because life is "so sad" (78) ('tão triste') (97), she wants Ricardo Reis to hold her tight "*only* because it *feels* good" (307) ('só pelo bem que sabe') (356) and she finds it satisfying enough to simply lay in bed with Reis, after the act of love making: "lying here without any future, I'm happy with what I have now" (171) ('basta-me o que tenho agora, estar aqui deitada, sem nenhum futuro') (201). In other words, she is grounded in reality, in the moment, and thus is able to experience the best happiness humans can perhaps feel: an ecstasy even, a dwelling, such as describe by Irigaray. Lídia respects, appreciates, welcomes and understands what Irigaray calls the "memory of the flesh." And at moments, we have the impression that Reis too, appreciates this "memory of the flesh" and the happiness

that can come from tangible things--i.e., from being with people, from eating and drinking, from simply walking through the streets of Lisbon and feeling its smells, its noises, its life. And yet, he ultimately fails to be at peace with such reality of human life and to reconcile body and soul, human and divine, finite and infinite, and so, he ultimately fails to tame his existential "tedium" and to in fact find his 'truer' self and the 'truer' other. The Reian process of self-erasure finally comes to a climax when Reis decides to accompany the already dead Pessoa into the cemetery, rather than make any final attempt to contact Lídia and assume his paternal responsibilities. His inability to attach himself to a real woman and his own baby--his flesh and blood--are the final indications that Reis was unable to take charge of his own life, to form his identity inter-relationally and accept his body as the house of his soul.

It is clear then that Saramago values relational ontological searches rather than individual ontological searches, for the former bring contact with others and make us realize that we can find fulfillment in our most human qualities, and furthermore, that we have the power and responsibility to build a better world and life for ourselves and others; the power to be fecund, to find happiness in the immediacy of life, and with and within our community. Saramago's message regarding the nature of ontological inquiry is thus different from that of Sartre, Hegel and Heidegger and quite close to that of Emmanuel Levinas. As Anthony Macri writes in "The Otherness of Selfhood,"

> The existentialist ontologies of both Heidegger and Sartre are intensely individualistic; though they discuss the encounter with the Other, they do not make interpersonal relations the cornerstone of their systems. Rather the individual being-in-the-world engages the world from the standpoint [of his/her] subjectivity as a meaning-making agent, providing meaning to that which has none in-itself. For Heidegger, the ability to create meaning for the world ends in death, and it is the anticipation of death that results in anxiety for the self, destabilizing it. In Sartre's philosophy, simply the possibility of creating meaning in complete and total freedom destabilizes the self, hurling it into a state of anxiety. The individual comes to a realization of his existential anxiety, for both thinkers in an act of self-reflection. […]. Levinas, attacking both the ontological idealism of Hegel and the individualistic concepts of existential thought, stresses the incoming of the Other as the moment of de-totalization. The other is the reminder of the infinite that prevents notions of totality. […]. [For Levinas] ontology is not based on deep personal and individualistic reflection, but rather one that erupts from a notion of the self as the one who meets the Other in a tenuous and at times volatile relationship; [and ontology is] not divorced from concrete existence but parts and parcels with it. [It is an ontology that puts] community and interpersonal relationships [at its core]. (1-8)

The very beginning and end of the novel are indications of Saramago's phenomenological message, a message that preaches about the need to ground ourselves in spatio-temporal present and realities. "Here the sea ends and the earth begins" ('Aqui o mar acaba e a terra principia') (1), reads the opening of the novel. And the end reiterates the same message: "Here, where the sea *has ended* and the earth awaits" ('Aqui, onde o mar se acabou e a terra espera') (415). The earth refers to Portugal, a country that must leave the

past behind with all its maritime and intercontinental enterprises and concentrate on strengthening itself within its own frontiers. But the earth also refers to the human body, a house that we all have, and must cherish so that we can finally be at home.

<p align="center">**notes (original Portuguese quotes)**</p>

[1] Longer original quotes in Portuguese will appear at the end as endnotes.

[2] For examples of Reis' Poetry see <u>Odes de Ricardo Reis</u>. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 1976. See also bilingual edition <u>Fernando Pessoa: Sixty Portuguese Poems</u>. Trans. and ed. F. E. G. Quintanilha; University of Wales Press, 1971.

[3] For example, he often seems to see his doubles and lose notion of who he is; he sometimes acts as if he is seating with other people even when he is alone (i.e., asks the waiter at the Hotel Bragança to leave his table set for two and has several chairs around his dinning table for his 'invisible' guests).

[4] He has the habit of relying on historical and mythical events (and figures) in his novels, which allows him to rewrite and question history.   See <u>Memorial do convento</u> (Baltasar and Blimunda) and <u>O evagelho segundo Jesus Cristo</u> ('The Gospel According to Jesus Christ").

[5] Lídia can in fact be seen as a replacement for the absent, invisible (and blind) God of Saramago's other novel <u>Ensaio sobre a cegueira</u> ('Blindness'). She becomes very much like the nameless female protagonist of this novel, the only character not affected by the plague of blindness--the person who guides and helps others and who displays empathy and concern for the well being of humanity.

[6] The old men, reminiscent of Velho do Restelo, and the statue of Adamastor are both mythical figures of Camões' epic long poem <u>Os Lusíadas</u> ('The Lusiads'), which is an apology of the Portuguese ultra-marine expansions. This further indicates that Portugal (and Reis) are immersed in past glories, they have illusions of grandiosity or happiness that are grounded in the past and thus, are unable to live in the present.

[7] See <u>Feminist Interpretations of Emmanuel Levinas</u>, specifically Sikka's and Ziarek's articles.

(Endnotes)

[1] Já conhecemos a criada que traz o pequeno almoço, é a Lídia, ela é também quem faz a cama e limpa e arruma o quarto […]. Lídia tem quê, os seus trinta anos, é uma mulher feita e bem feita, morena Portuguesa, mais para o baixo que para o alto, se há importância em mencionar os sinais particulares ou as características físicas duma simples criada que até agora não fez mais que limpar o chão, servir o pequeno-almoço […]. […] Ricardo Reis notou o sinal que ela tinha perto da asa do nariz […] (86-87; […] pousou o tabuleiro na mesa, aproximou-se da cama, num gesto simples pôs-lhe a mão na testa, Está com febre […] colocou uma das mãos sobre a mão de Lídia, fechou os olhos, se não for mais que estas duas lágrimas poderei retê-las assim, como retinha aquela mão castigada de trabalhos, áspera, quase bruta, tão diferente das mãos de Cloe, Neera e a outra Lídia, dos afuselados dedos, das cuidadas unhas, das macias palmas de Marcenda, da sua única mão viva, quero dizer, a esquerda é morte antecipada […]. (168); Lídia insistindo, Só mais esta colher, é o caldo de galinha que ele se recusa a acabar, por fastio, para ser rogado também, jogo que parecerá ridículo a quem estiver de perfeita saúde

[…] que em verdade não está Ricardo Reis tão doente que não possa alimentar-se por suas próprias mãos e forças. (170); Lídia sente-se feliz, mulher que com tanto gosto se deita não tem ouvidos […]. (303)

[2] Se quer que eu vá ter consigo quando tiver casa, nos meus dias de saída, Tu queres, Quero, Então irás, até que, Até que arranje alguém da sua educação, Não era isso que eu queria dizer, Quando tal tiver de ser, diga-me assim Lídia não voltes mais a minha casa, e eu não volto, Às vezes não sei bem quem tu és, Sou uma criada de hotel, Mas chamas-te Lídia e dizes as coisas de uma certa maneira, Em a gente se pondo a falar, assim como eu estou agora, com a cabeça pousada no seu ombro, as palavras saem diferentes, até eu sinto, Gostava que encontrasses um bom marido, Também gostava, mas ouço as outras mulheres, as que dizem que têm bons maridos, e fico a pensar, Achas que não são bons maridos, Para mim, não, Que é um bom marido, para ti, Não sei, És difícil de contentar, Nem por isso, basta-me o que tenho agora, estar aqui deitada, sem nenhum futuro […]. (200-1)

[3] Estes dias são bons. (356); A casa vive o seu sábado de aleluia, o seu domingo de páscoa, por graça e obra desta mulher, serva humilde, que passa as mãos sobre as coisas e as deixa lustralmente limpas, nem mesmo em tempos de Dona Luísa e juiz da Relação, com seu regimento de criadas de fora, dentro e cozinha, resplandeceram com tanta glória estas paredes e estes moveis, abençoada seja Lídia entre as mulheres […]. Ainda há poucos dias cheirava a bafio, a mofo, a cotão rolado, a esgoto renitente, e hoje a luz chega aos mais remotos cantos, fulge nos vidros e nos cristais ou faz de todo o vidro cristal, derrama grandes toalhas sobre os encerados, o próprio tecto fica estrelado de reverbações quando o sol entra pelas janelas, esta morada é celeste, diamante no interior de diamante, e é pela vulgaridade de um trabalho de limpeza que se alcançam estas superiores sublimidades. Talvez também por tão amiúde se deitarem Lídia e Ricardo Reis, por tanto gosto de corpo darem e tomarem, não sei que deu a estes dois para de súbito se terem tornado tão carnalmente exigentes e davidosos, será o verão que os aquece, será de estar no ventre aquele minúsculo fermento […]. (357)

[4] Acabaram as férias de Lídia, tudo voltou ao que dantes era, passará a vir no seu dia de folga, uma vez por semana, agora, mesmo quando o sol encontra uma janela aberta, a luz é diferente, mole, baça, e o tamiz to tempo recomeçou a peneirar o impalpável pó que faz desmaiar os contornos e as feições. Quando, há noite, Ricardo Reis abre a cama para se deitar, mal consegue ver a almofada onde pousará a cabeça, e de manhã não conseguiria levantar-se se com as suas próprias mãos não se identificasse, linha por linha, o que de si ainda é possível achar, como uma impressão digital deformada por uma cicatriz larga e profunda. (357-8); Regressado, depois de terminadas as férias de Lídia, ao seu hábito de dormir até quase há hora do almoço, Ricardo Reis deve ter sido o último habitante de Lisboa a saber que se dera um golpe de estado em Espanha. Ainda com os olhos pesados de sono, foi à escada buscar o jornal, do capacho o levantou e meteu debaixo do braço, voltou ao quarto bocejando, mais um dia que começa, ah, este longo fastídio de existir, este fingimento de lhe chamar serenidade. (371)

[5] […] esta é a casa, vasta, ampla, para numerosa família, numa mobília também de mogno escuro, profunda cama, alto guarda-fato, uma sala de jantar completa, o aparador, o guarda-prata, ou louças, dependendo das posses, a mesa extensível, e o escritório, de torcido e tremido pau-santo, mesa de bilhar, puído num dos cantos, a cozinha, a casa de banho rudimentar, mas aceitável, porém todos os móveis estão nus e vazios, nenhuma peça de louça, nenhum lençol ou toalha, A pessoa que aqui viveu era uma senhora idosa, viúva […]. 206; […] a casa encheu-se de rumores, o correr da água, o vibrar dos canos, o bater do contador, depois o silêncio voltou. […] (219); […] e afinal, disse-o em voz alta, como um recado que não deveria esquecer, Eu moro aqui, é aqui que eu moro, é esta a minha casa, é esta, não tenho outra,

então cercou-o um súbito medo, o medo de quem, em funda cave, empurra uma porta que abre para a escuridão doutra cave ainda mais funda, ou para a ausência, o vazio, o nada, a passagem para o não ser. Despiu a gabardina e o casaco, e sentiu frio. (219)

[6] Voltou à parte da frente da casa, ao quarto, olhou pela janela suja a rua deserta, o céu agora coberto, lá estava, lívido contra a cor plúmbea das nuvens, o Adamastor bramindo em silêncio, algumas pessoas contemplavam os navios, de vez em quando levantavam a cabeça para ver se a chuva vinha, os dois velhos conversavam sentados no mesmo banco […]. (219)

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The ** (stars) indicate that the original translation has been modified: the first star indicates beginning of change and the last star indicates end of change.

THE AFTERLIFE OF THE BERLIN WALL:
MONIKA MARON'S LIFE-WRITING ON THE HYPHEN
alma **christova**

Monika Maron's debut *Flight of Ashes* (*Flugasche)* was censored in the GDR and was published 1981 in West Germany instead. With Maron's decision to stay in her communist homeland, she became a German-German author 'living and writing on the hyphen'. The metaphor "Life on the hyphen" was coined by Cuban-American critic Gustavo Perez Firmat[1] and developed by Azade Seyhan in her seminal work *Writing Outside the Nation* (2001). A quotation from this work is my first point of reference in framing the idea of the Berlin Wall as a hyphen:

> A hyphen simultaneously separates and connects, contests and agrees. It creates new dialect(ic)s and needs an alternative space, a third geography. This third space can actually be figured as a terrain (of) writing, as the Greek roots of its two syllables suggest. [2]

The Berlin Wall is probably the largest and most significant hyphen in European history of the 20th century. Two dates mark the high points: August 13, 1961, when the Wall went up; and November 9, 1989, when it came down. In both cases a radical change took place almost overnight. Divided in zones, Postwar Berlin truly came to epitomize the Cold War in Europe with its proverbial *Mauer:* the utmost physical image of the Iron Curtain.

Erected literally overnight as operation "Wall of China", the Berlin Wall both physically and symbolically divided the city into East and West Berlin, creating thus a frontier between Europe's communist East and capitalist West. Contrary to the claim of East German propaganda, the *Mauer* was not an "*antifascist wall of protection" (antifaschistischer Schutzwall)* intended to avoid aggression from the West. It was designed entirely for domestic use: not to stop people getting *in* but to prevent them from getting *out*. The image of the Iron Curtain can hardly escape the mind when thinking of the *Mauer*. Its diacritical value as a 'hyphen' is further crucial for my argument.

Twenty eight years later – on October 7, 1989, when East Germany celebrated its fortieth anniversary – the festivities turned into a protest against the regime, which resulted in over 1 000 arrests. Guest of honor Gorbatchov was welcomed in front of the Palace of the Republic by demonstrators pleading: "*Gorbi, help us!".* His response phrased "*Whoever comes too late is punished by life"*   (*Wer zu spät kommt, den bestraft das Leben*) became a turning point.

Obviously the Wall fell as the combined result of both internal and external pressures. But the impression of its Fall, as another "overnight event" remains.

Today the Wall is barely visible, although where it stood has been marked out in downtown Berlin with a red line or a double row of cobblestones. A few memorials remain here and there. The people of Berlin could not wait to see the back of this painful scar. It is difficult to imagine the great metropolis being split down the middle by a curtain of concrete. Although Berlin has been significantly transformed since 1989, not all traces of the Wall have been erased from the city. Needless to mention, demolishing the Wall in the head will take much longer than it will take for a demolition firm to do it on the street.

In her 2003 Essay *Geburtsort Berlin* Monika Maron writes:

> Inzwischen sind die gekapptenVerbindungen zwischen den beiden Teilen längst wieder verbunden und die Mitte der Stadt gehört wieder allen. Aber immer noch, wenn ich über eine der Linien fahre, auf denen einmal die Mauer stand, überkommt mich ein seltsam heiligmäßiges Gefühl. Obwohl meine Wohnung und mein bevorzugtes Restaurant im Westen liegen und die meisten meiner Freunde, auch die früher im Osten wohnten, dort leben, wird der Ostteil Berlins mir wohl immer vertrauter bleiben. Warum ich diese Vertrautheit eher fliehe als suche, werde ich vielleicht in zehn Jahren wissen. Alle Antworten, die mir jetzt einfallen, glaube ich nicht. (73-74)

It is then these deep traces left behind that I want to investigate in my paper. The afterlife of the Berlin Wall is understood as an echo, as an aftershock. What literary expression of this echo do we find on the literary scene of the Berliner Republik?

Why is Monika Maron a good example for such a hyphenated position in the sense of Seyhan's "third space", sitting on the "fence" and (re)claiming an identity? Maron has never occupied a position within the officially-sanctioned canon of GDR literature until the Unification in 1990. And yet, her work continues to be read as a guide to conditions in the former German Democratic Republic. Today she is considered one of Germany's most prominent writers. In 2003 she received the prestigious *Friedrich Hoelderlin Literaturpreis* of Bad Homburg. The consensus of the jury was that Maron managed to capture the German-German condition in the second half of the 20-th century and what is even more important is her demonstrated ability to *narrate* this condition in an unique way.

Born in 1941 "between two bomb attacks" in Berlin, she came into the world out of wedlock, as *Monika Iglarz* to a half-Jewish Polish mother. In 1955 her destiny was profoundly changed when she became the stepdaughter of Karl Maron, one of GDR's founding fathers, a member of the "Gruppe Ulbricht", head of the *Volkspolizei*, and from 1955 to 1963 the GDR's Minister of the Interior. She was raised in a family of the highest GDR-*Nomenklatura*. No doubt the awareness of this relationship has had a significant role to play in the reception of Maron's work, lending apparent weight to the seeming veracity of her overt or covert social criticism. And yet it is precisely this relationship that should make readers proceed with caution, for it underlies and undermines rather than ratifies much of what she has to say or write. Maron's work simultaneously lays claim to and sets

out in pursuit of an authenticity of voice vis-à-vis her former homeland in the East. By exploring her autofiction and seemingly paradoxical ongoing quest for roots and identity in terms of the now non-existent GDR, this paper seeks to demonstrate that she is in fact a more complex and intriguing figure than critics tend to allow in their viewing of her work as only a sourcebook for reflections on the 'pleasures of collective life' in communist Germany.

Being simultaneously the insider and the outsider, sitting between the two chairs in this extra-territory, Maron 'die Bonzentochter' was able to create her life–writing on the hyphen, which accentuates the crossroad between East and West, between communism and capitalism, where many German bi-cultural "comings to terms with the past" get accumulated and many dualities become apparent: the schizophrenia between public and private and the consequent identity crisis in *real* socialism, the internal conflict between victim and perpetrator, the tension between postmemory and "real" memory, the generational conflict etc. Above anything else, it is the German language being the same in both parts of Germany that plays here a crucial role in establishing of such German-German hyphenation:

> It seemed to Rosalind in retrospect that she had lived in two different worlds. Whatever was right in one was wrong in the other, and even such simple concepts as good and evil did not mean the same thing in each. The one language existed in the other like a secret language, although it consisted of the same words. And since she had been unable to draw a dividing line between a simple and a two-fold life either as a child or later on, she concluded that it had been the determining factor of her life from the very beginning. [3]

It is the unique combination of theoretical perspectives that distinguishes a new reading of literary works. My argument emerges out of the following theoretical matrices: First, the concept of postmemory developed by Marianne Hirsch; econd, Paul John Eakin's notion of "the story of the story", developed in his book *How Our Lives Become Stories. Making Selves* (1999); and third, Azade Seyhan's notion of "diasporic writing of exiles". A point of departure is Philippe Lejeune's theory of the autobiographical pact between the writer and the reader, which claims the "simple" trinity between author, main protagonist and narrator. The need of the author to tell her "own" story is central to this auto-docu-fiction. Most helpful for my interpretation is Erika Berroth's wonderful take on *Pavel's Letters* in her conference paper "Docu-Fiction and *memento mori*: Image and Text in Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe*" presented at the MLA conference in San Diego in December 2003.

Life-writing shapes all of Maron's novels, auto-reflexive essays and opinion pieces. In 1999 she published her "memory text" *Pawels Briefe*, (*Pavel's Letters*), which she subtitled *eine Familiengeschichte* – a family story or family history. (Strangely enough there is no subtitle in the English translation by Brigitte Goldstein).

With this particular autobiographical project Maron took a new step that is significant in its contribution to the current discourse on representation and memory of the Holocaust now that the task of remembering is transmitted from the people directly involved to the generations that immediately followed. At the same time, the text intervenes in the processes of re-negotiating cultural memory in the unified Germany. [4]

Maron's hybrid text is uniquely suited to articulate the connections between the personal, the cultural, the social, the political, and between representation and social experience. It shows the new face of Maron's life-writing on the hyphen.

I argue that reading Maron's *Pavel's Letters* as a work of *autofictional postmemory* adds an important dimension to the understanding of Maron's provocative self-referentiality as a tool to represent and juxtapose the events that shaped the scene of 20th-century Germany.

I have chosen *Pavel's Letters* as a focus of my argument, because within its structure and fabric Lejeune's autobiographical pact is sealed prominently: the author, the main protagonist, and the narrator are one and the same person – Monika Maron. I find, however, Maron's 'Eigenfiktionalisierung' as the core of this autofiction, for it functions as a prismatic device that illuminates different facets of 'real' life on the hyphen which nevertheless is 'narrated'.

Maron discovered long-forgotten family documents – photographs, postcards, and letters. Some of them are reproduced in her family history. They constitute the legacy of the last exchanges between Maron's grandfather Pavel and his family, before he was murdered by the Nazis in a ghetto in Poland. Maron never knew her maternal grandparents, whose life-stories she sets up to reconstruct. Reading the text as a work of autofictional postmemory highlights the personal quest for re-structuring a Self damaged by discontinuities. In tracing of her family history from the Weimar Republic through National Socialism and GDR Communism, Maron reveals the *continuities* she establishes between systems that deform their subjects and derail biographies – regardless of the ideologies that fuel them.

2. Postmemory:

A quotation from Marianne Hirsch's book is my second point of reference as a defintiion pf postmemory:

> In my reading, *postmemory* is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection. Postmemory is a powerful and very particular form of memory precisely because its connection to its object or source is mediated not through recollection but through an imaginative investment and creation. This is not to say that memory itself is unmediated, but that it is more directly connected to the past. Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grew

up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated. (FF 22)

While focusing on Maron's narrative, I read the narrator's relationship to the family photographs in the light of Hirsch's discussion. Family pictures and the letters in *Pavel's Letters* are part of the autobiographical pact. They are an important component of Maron's new textual strategy.

Pavel's Letters is framed and embedded – both by the front and back inside cover – by identical photographs of a forest. This forest, we realize as we read, could be the place where Pavel and countless others from his ghetto in Poland, were killed by the Nazis. According to Hirsch, the sum of images in all those Holocaust photographs – those of horror and those of familial scenes – are connected to death and to public mourning. (Hirsch 1996, 668). She argues further that those photographs become sites of identification, become the contextual frame, for a generation twice removed – a generation for which post-memory – remembering not our own experience, but the experience of those who came before us – becomes the defining moment. The images "thus […] bridge the gap between the viewers who are personally connected to the event and those who are not. They expand the postmemorial circle"(Hirsch, 1996, 668).

Maron's hybrid text is a memory game of simultaneous doing and undoing, exposing the contingent nature of autobiographical and historiographic reconstruction, and yet attempting it. The spaces between an image's resistance and invitation serve as the wellspring of literary imagination, in other words, for a writing cure of the Self. The images of the dead carry no meaning until the writing Self constructs it, writing herself into the story of the dead not as a process of recovery, but as a self-search. The images inserted into this *docu-fiction* emphasize the elegiac quality of photography that always arrests a past moment and marks the passing of time, serves as a *memento mori* for the living who talk to them and through them.[5]

The deep sense of displacement suffered by the children of exile, along with the elegiac aura of the memory of a place to which they wish to return, surprisingly, do not create a feeling of absence, but rather a feeling of a haunting presence and awareness that there were too many stories to tell, too many voices to be heard, with which even Hirsch was not able to fill in the gaps and absences. "What relationship can one have to the traumatic events of one's parents' and grandparent's lives – horror? Ambivalence? Envy? A negative nostalgia? In perpetual exile, this/ my generation's practice of mourning is as determinative as it is interminable and ultimately impossible." (FF 244-245)

The narrator's mother Hella, a communist to the marrow of her bones, does not speak, she does not even remember the letters written by her father from the ghetto, not even her own letters, written in response. This "Verdrängung" (repression) in her case must have its reasons, such as the building of the new life in socialism for instance, but what is more important is that that Monika the granddaughter (e.g. author, narrator and main

protagonist in Lejeune's autobiographical trinity) has almost no access to the repressed story (stories) that have shaped her life and identity:

> Remembering is actually the wrong word for what I had in mind with regard to my grandparents, for in me was no submerged knowledge about them I needed to bring to light. I was familiar with the rough outlines of their story, but missing was their inner life and most of all a deeper knowledge about it on my part. For me, the essence of my grandparents was their absence. Certain was only that they once existed. (PB 2)

From the photographs forming the basis of this narrative, Pavel's face, looking towards a future he was never to experience, stands out powerfully. The photograph's temporal irony elicits mourning and empathy. We mourn the person in the photograph because we recognize him, but this identification remains at a distance marked by incomprehension, anger and rage. He may be like us, but he is not us: he is visibly a ghost and a shadow from another time. He is and remains the other, emanating from another time and space. He clearly exists in another world from ours, or does he? Why is he so uncannily familiar? Our entry into the circle of postmemory through the act of familial looking enlarges the notion of family without dislodging it from a historical and geographical specificity that signals its difficult accessibility. (FF 266) Maron mobilizes the potential of photographs and demonstrates how the workings of postmemory will and must include the reader. Maron illustrates that what is "true" now is more the reminder of what was lost, not what *was*.

Is then Maron's generation not collectively constructed in relation to those ghosts and shadows, is this generation not shaped by their loss and by their own ambivalence about mourning the shadows from the past? As we look at the pictures, they look back at us, constituting the return of the repressed. Photographs can suggest what is or was; they can provide a visual content for our ambivalent longings. In the works of authors like Maron or Sebald, they can become building blocks of postmemory. As such, they can also remind us of the distance, the absence, the unbridgeable gap that, in postmodernity, makes us who we are:

> Why should I feel that I had to justify my writing this story, about which little is certain, even now when the fate of this vanished generation, and that of their children, has been assigned to history, where it has been entombed? When nothing new can be added to the life stories such as those of Pavel and Josefa Iglarz, and certainly not by someone who is following their traces from a safe distance. Contemporaries and fellow victims of my grandparents spoke about it, their voices filled with disbelief that something like this could happen and that anybody could survive it. Memories have their time. (PL 1)

By using the most conventional of photographic genres, the family pictures, as an important component of her textual strategy, Maron's imagetext with its characteristically affiliative look preserves the power of commemoration into the generations of postmemory. The architecture itself figures the nature of postmemory.

We reanimate the pictures with our own knowledge of daily life, and we experience, emotionally, the death that took those lives so violently. In its historical specificity, the text has also been able to attribute guilt and responsibility, to define agency.

3. "The story of the story":

In his book *How Our Lives Become Stories. Making Selves* (1999) Paul John Eakin develops the idea of the "story of the story". Discussing Art Spiegelman's *Maus: A Survivors' Tale* (1986 and 1991) he creates the notion of "the story of the story". The cartoonist Spiegelman records, transcribes and translates into comic strip form his father's astonishing tale of his survival in Auschwitz. In retelling his father's story, Spiegelman confronts the Holocaust and its consequences for his parents, his brother and himself.

Both Spiegelman's and Maron's texts differ in important ways from the large class of collaborative or "as-told-to" autobiographies to which they belong. In both cases the autobiographical act is doubled, for the story of the other, of the informant is accompanied by the story of the individual gathering this oral history — in this case Monika Maron herself. This second narrative Eakin terms "the story of the story", which relates the genesis and execution of the collaborative enterprise that produces the first story (Hella's experience of the Holocaust). In *Pavel's Letters* "the story of the story" structures the narrative we read! The emphasis is on the performance of the collaboration and therefore on the relation between the two individuals involved. Surprising as it may seem (but quite logical), given the very great intrinsic interest of the story of the other – the informant – in these cases, Eakin argues that the two narratives – in the case of *Pavel's Letters* these of Monika's and Hella's – are not offered to us on an equal footing. If his reading is correct, it is the story of the story that has the upper hand. That is to say, that *Pavel's Letters* is clearly Monika Maron's own authobiography. She herself supports this idea: "Maybe it was also my first attempt at inventing meaning and mystery in my own life." (PL 3)

Thus the narrative structure in this particular case is telling us something fundamental about the relational structure of the autobiographer's identity in the first place, about his roots and involvement in another person's life and story. If Pavel's story is Monika's story, then the focus of the autobiography is on someone else's story, and the primary activity of the autobiographer is the telling of this story. In such a case the display of the story of the other is nevertheless an autobiography, because children are always episodes in someone else's narrative. Eakin sums it up: "The implicit determinism of this view of *relational identity* is inescapable, and it informs the act of self-representation accordingly: the space of autobiography, the space of the self, is literally occupied by the autobiography and the self of the other."[6] Yet, at the same time, the telling of the story of the other offers these oral historians maybe the only valid and extremely important measure of self-determination, for the other's story, the other's life, is possessed – indeed created – by the recording self.

Conclusion:

My triad of approaches captures further a quality of Maron's 'life-writing on the hyphen', walking the tight-rope between fact and fiction, that expands its national – German – context and that participates in what could be labeled a "new world literature" – the literature of displacement, hybridity, and postmemory. Azade Seyhan sums it up: "In an age of shifting perceptions of national and ethnic identity, destabilized borders, and nonterritorial coalitions, autobiography, precisely because it is a genre that defies definition and comes under many guises, is uniquely positioned to give voice to structures of experience that resist naming."[7]

In reading *Pavel's Letters* as Maron's own autobiography, it can be ultimately shown that postmemory is as productive in creating a past as autobiography is in creating a life. Neither is certain or fixed. Such narrative experiment contributes to a new poetics of remembering:

> Replacing the accounts of the generation of eye-witnesses is the memory of those who remember them, remember through them. Of central importance, then, is the *mediation* of memory – the passing on of memory to the next generation and the search for transport *media* – in addition to the memory of the event.[8]

Pavel's Letters makes thus a case for an essentially reciprocal relationship between the truth of what happened and the truth of how it is remembered. I argue that in *Pavel's Letters* we have a remarkable illustration of the hyphen between memory and postmemory in the literary production of Unified Germany at the very end of the 20th century. This is one particular manifestation of a hyphen in Maron's work and life-road. Seyhan suggests: "It is a truism born of the idea of paradigm shift that when the present changes, so does the past. When a new structure of knowledge emerges, our understanding of the past often undergoes a radical revision" (152).

In *Geburtsort Berlin* Monika Maron reflects one more time on the afterlife of the Berlin Wall:

> I cannot understand the principles of my remembering. Seemingly by chance and unexpectedly the walls, which only I can hear, keep throwing back at me the dull echo of my life. (75)

Precisely this truth of remembrance links the literature of postmemory in a German context with the literature "written outside the nation" by authors displaced in different ways through the shared poetics of memory.

notes

[1] As The David Feinson Professor of Humanities at Columbia University and the author of many volumes of essays, poetry, and fiction, Firmat has explored issues of binational consciousness and identity, as well as the implications for all writers of bilingualism. In *Life on the*

Hyphen   (University of Texas Press, 1994) and *Next Year in Cuba* (Anchor Books, 1995), especially, he reflects on the vexed situation of Cuban-Americans. In his works he writes very personally about the condition of exile and "the prosodic hide-and-seek that we call 'linguistic play.'

[2] Azade Seyhan: *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001): 96. Seyhan considers themes of loss, witness, identity, and exclusion in what she calls "diasporic writing" – the writing on borderlands, the writing with an accent, that can "reclaim lost personal and national histories as well as connect disparate and distant cultural traditions" (115)

[3]   Monika Maron: *The Defector* (London: Readers International Inc., 1988): 67. Translated by David Newton Martinelli

[4] Erika Berroth: "Docu-Fiction and *memento mori*: Image and Text in Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe"*. Unpublished paper presented at the MLA Conference in San Diego, USA, December 2003.

[5]   Erika Berroth: "Docu-Fiction and *memento mori*: Image and Text in Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe"*. Unpublished paper presented at the MLA Conference in San Diego, USA, December 2003.[6] Paul John Eakin: *How Our Lives Become Stories. Making Selves* (XXXX1999)

[7] Azade Seyhan: *Writing outside the nation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001): 96

[8] Erika Berroth: "Docu-Fiction and *memento mori*: Image and Text in Monika Maron's *Pawels Briefe"*. Unpublished paper presented at the MLA Conference in San Diego, USA, December 2003.

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COINCIDENTIA OPPOSITORUM IN *DER STEPPENWOLF*
pouneeh **saeedi**

Der Steppenwolf is on the surface the story of an intellectual living in the Europe of *entre-guerres* disenchanted with what he calls "the disease of the time" (*"Krankheit der Zeit"*). He can see the shadow of another World War looming large and is dismayed to see his fellow Europeans doing nothing to avert its outbreak. His articles are met with cynicism as Europeans continue to blame each other for the events that led to the emergence of the First World War. However, the pervading gloom is not the only cause to *Der Steppenwolf*'s despair; it is also an inner bifurcation which aggravates his sense of "homelessness" (*"Heimatlosigkeit"*): the raging wolf within is kept in check and does not find breeding grounds to roam about.

Many critics of Hermann Hesse believe *Der Steppenwolf* to be the author's most autobiographical novel: The protagonist Harry Haller shares his initials with his creator, he is around the same age and feels like an outsider in a world that is not willing to take his views into consideration. Hermann Hesse is giving vent to the disappointment that he felt when publishing his political articles which met the same fate as Harry Haller's. Towards the end of the novel, in "The Magical Theater," he evokes the title of one of his polemical essay *"O Freunde, nicht diese Toene!"*(Der Steppenwolf, 234) which is also reminiscent of Beethoven's 9th symphony "Ode to Joy": "O Freunde, nicht diese Toene! Sondern lasst uns angenehmere anstimmen und freudenvollere!"

For a better understanding of *Der Steppenwolf* it is essential to read a series of essays Hesse published in 1920 under the title "*Blick ins Chaos"* which influenced many a writer, amongst them, T.S. Eliot, who decided to incorporate part of it in *The Wasteland:* "Already half Europe, at all events half of Eastern Europe, is on the road to Chaos. In a state of drunk illusion she is reeling into the abyss and, as she reels, she sings a drunken hymn such as Dmitri Karamazov sang. The insulted citizen laughs that song to scorn, the saint and seer hear it with tears."

Hesse posits the supremacy of the Asiatic man represented in the figures of the Karamazov Brothers over the European man, in that, the former can acknowledge his elemental drives (*"Urtriebe"*) and elemental forces (*"Urkraefte"*) unlike the latter. He is brave enough to look within and catch a glimpse of the inner chaos. Being responsive to the devil (*"Teufel"*), is exactly the way which the Karamazovs have been summoned to show us the way. Once more, Dostoveysky has presented the unconscious in the form of the devil (*Eine Literaturgeschichte*, 332). The Karamazovian god is beyond good and evil, their deity is what Hesse in *Demian* has called Abraxas, the god that enshrines the realm of the dark and that of the light. Der Steppenwolf at the beginning is incapable of "magical thinking" *("das magische Denken"*). By "magical thinking," Hesse means the ability to grant equal credance to the dark and light sides of one's being. This magical ability enables the person to commune with all things, to feel compassion for all things, to understand everything and to approve

of everything existing on earth (311). In the figures of the Karamazov brothers "the without and the within, the good and the evil, God and Satan have come together" (324). According to Hesse, for those who adhere to proven morals, Europe and its spirit are unique, something that is firmly there (*"etwas Festes und Seiendes"*), while for the others, it is something that is in the process of becoming, changing, constantly changeable(*"ein Werdendes, Veraenderliches, ewig Wandelbares"*) (327).

Coincidentia Oppositurom is a common theme with Hermann Hesse, so much so, that in *Demian* the worlds of light and darkness come together in Sinclair's household; in *Siddhartha,*Samsara becomes as essential as Nirvana in Siddhartha's spiritual upliftment; the Apollonian Narziss and Dionysian Goldmund complement each other in *Narziss und Goldmund*, and in *Der Steppenwolf*, Harry Haller moves from alienation to accomodation by learning to look his inner wolf in the face and reconcile it with his human side.

Harry Haller who calls himself "Der Steppenwolf" has a feeling that there will be light at the end of the tunnel of Chaos:

> Who read by night above the Rhine the cloudscript of the drifting mists? It was the Steppenwolf. And who over the ruins of his life pursued its fleeting, fluttering significance, while he suffered its seeming meaninglessness and lived its seeming madness, hoped in secret at the last turn of the labyrinth of Chaos for revelation and God's presence. (Steppenwolf, 50)

Nietzsche along with Dostoveysky is amongst some of the names that are mentioned in the novel as part of Harry Haller's intellectual predilections. And it is Zarathustra who is evoked in the term *"Chaos"*: "One must still have chaos to give birth to a *dancing* star" (Nietzsche, 284) (my italics), and with "dancing" we enter another realm of *Coincidentia Oppositorum* which Harry Haller experiences during the Individuation process which he has to undergo to become eligible to enter "*Das Magische Theater,*" a zone where he will come to experience "*Das Magische Denken*."

When Nietzsche evokes the image of dancing, it is only to elaborate on what he calls "recurring existence."

> ...all things themselves are dancing: they come and offer their hands and laugh and flee—and come back. Everything goes, everything comes back; eternally rolls the wheel of being. Everything dies, everything blossoms again; eternally runs the year of being. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; eternally the same house of being is built. Everything parts, everything greets every other thing again; eternally the ring of being remains faithful to itself. In every Now, being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity. (329-330)

Earlier, Nietzsche had said : "And we should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. And we should call every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh" (322).

It is only after Der Steppenwolf masters the art of dancing, and the dancer in him becomes the dance that he is ready to enter "The Magical Theater."

One of the distinguishing features of *Der Steppenwolf* is its form which seems to be structured like a musical piece. Theodore Ziolkowski maintains that *Der Steppenwolf* met with the displeasure of many a critic and reader when it was published in 1927; objections were raised to both its form and content. One of Hesse's remarks in defense of the structure of the *Der Steppenwolf,* which had been labelled by many as formless, is of special importance: "From a strictly artistic view der <Steppenwolf> is at least as good as <Goldmund>, it is solidly built around the "*Intermezzo"* of the treatise (*"Trakat"*) like a sonata and tackles its theme head-on" (Ziolkowski, 354).

What is confounding during the first read of the novel is that it lacks a clear-cut form, for example there are no divisions separating different chapters; instead, we are faced with a continous phantasmagoria of events which are cut off right after the appearance of what seems to be an unnecessary document called "The Treatise of the Steppenwolf" (354). Ziolkowski goes on to draw the boundaries that separate the three movements of the piece which can be described at best as a sonata in prose. He says the introduction, the unfolding of the plot and the "The Magical Theater" episode constitute the three movements of this sonata. The Introduction in turn is divided into three different components: Harry Haller is introduced to us by the nephew of his former land lady, his own notes and then the treatise (355). Given Hermann Hesse's appreciation for music, Ziolkowski's remarks do not sound far-fetched; Hesse evokes music in many of his stories including *Gertrude* and *Das Glasperlenspiel*.

The first movement is crucial to our understanding of Harry Haller; we see him through the eyes of the bourgeois, his own eyes, and the eyes of the other, an other who appears to him in a moment of *Unverborgenheit*. The most objective view is that of the other presented in the form of a treatise ("*der Trakat"*). The treatise delves deep into the soul of der Steppenwolf, telling us that Harry Haller is not the only Steppenwolf on the planet, other Steppenwolves can be in our midst without our being aware of them. The plight of the Steppenwolf is similar to those caught up in the Dantesque Vestibule: the abode of the weather-cock mind, "the vague tolerance which will neither approve nor condemn, the cautious cowardice for which no decision is final."

> To take his own view of the matter, the Steppenwolf stood entirely outside the world of convention, since he had neither family life nor social ambitions […] Nevertheless his life in many aspects was thoroughly ordinary[…]He was capable of loving the political criminal, the revolutionary or intellectual seducer, the outlaw of state and society, as his brother, but as for theft and robbery, murder and rape, he would not have known how to deplore them otherwise than in a thoroughly bourgeois manner. In this he was always recognizing and affirming with one half of himself, in thought and act, what with the other half he fought against and denined. (Hesse, Steppenwolf, 54-55)

Another feature of the Steppenwolves is that they are "suicidal":

> Metaphysically considered, the matter has a different and a much clearer aspect. In this aspect, the suicidal present themselves as those who are overtaken by the sense of guilt inherent in individuals, those souls that find the aim of life not in the perfectin and molding of the self, but in liberating themselves by going back to the mother. (52) (sic.)

This rings true with Harry Haller who is putting up with all the troubles that come his way, with one single thought as a source of consolation, and that being that he will commit suicide with a razor on his fiftieth birthday.

"The Treatise on the Steppenwolf" suggests an alternative to Harry Haller's life-style: "Humor."

> Humor alone, that magnificent discovery of those who are cut short in their calling to highest endeavor […] humor alone (perhaps the most inborn and brilliant achievemtn of the spirit) attains to the impossible and brings every aspect of human existence within the rays of its prism. To live in the world as though it were not of the world, to respect the law and yet to stand above it, to have possessions as though "one possessed nothing;" to renounce as though it were no renunciation, all these favorite and often formulated propositions of an exalted worldly wisdom, it is in the power of humor alone to make efficacious. (58)

But in order to attain humor and become worthy of "The Magical Theater," Harry Haller must undergo a process of *Individuation* which requires that he acknowledge the "shadow" and the "anima" within himself.

A visit to a professor of oriental studies proves to be a turning-point in Harry Haller's life. There he sees his Goethe, the symbol of immortality (*"Unsterblichkeit"*) being portrayed in a lacklustre way, stripped of his aura, frozen in time. He cannot hold his tongue for long letting the "wolf" within, get the better of him, and this irks him to the extreme. Homebound Harry Haller wishes not, for there he might enact his suicidal thoughts. Instead he roams the streets until he decides to spend some time at the "Black Eagle" Bar, and it is there that he meets his anima, Hermine. Hermine is a female version of the name of the author and indicates that Hesse himself was engaged in a soul-searching journey similar to that of his character. Hermann in the novel, is Harry's childhood friend, his alter-ego.

Another instance of *coincidentia oppositorum* occurs when Harry begins to see Hermine in a new light; he describes her as *"knabenhaft;"* it is the magic (*"Zauber")* of the hermaphrodite (Der Steppenwolf, 194) that lures him toward her; in her, he sees the father and the mother combined.

After meeting with the woman who turns out to be his anima, Harry Haller drifts into sleep and has a dream. Dreams play a key-role in Hermann Hesse's stories: *Siddhartha* dreams of Kamala being transformed into a dead bird and *Robert Aghion* dreams of the God that "had acquired three heads and six arms" (*Robert Aghion* 223), to mention just a couple of examples. Harry Haller's dream is crucial to an understanding of the inner workings of his unconscious. He dreams of Wolfgang von Goethe who is reproaching him for his reaction toward his portrait at the professor's house:

> We Immortals do not like to be taken seriously , we like fun (*"Spass"*). Seriousness (*"der Ernst"*) is an outcome of time; it comes about, I would like to let you know, as a result of overestimating time. Even I had once overestimated the value of time, thus I wanted to grow to be a hundred years old. In eternity (*"Ewigkeit"*) however, you see, there is no time; eternity is but a single moment, just long enough for a joke (*"Spass"*).   (Der Steppenwolf, 100)

Hermine had earlier told him that Harry was engaged in the process of idealization of Goethe, making a picture of him just as much as the professor was. In other words, he had fallen into the same pitfall:

> Goethe has been dead a hundred years, and you're very fond of him, and you have a wonderful picture in your head of what he must have looked like, and you have the right to, I suppose. But the artist who adores Goethe too, and makes a picture of him, has no right to do it, nor the professor either, nor anybody else—because you don't like it. […]. If you had sense, you would laugh at the artist and the professor—laugh and be done with it. (Steppenwolf, 97-98)

Laughter which is evoked on various occasions in the novel is another zone where opposites can be reconciled. According to Meister Eckhart whose trace is sensed in Hesse's use of *"Unio Mystica,"*(Der Steppenwolf, 196) believed laughter to be the ultimate *Gelassenheit*, the music of the divine cosmos.

Reso Karalaschwili deemed Harry Haller's dream of such importance that he has allocated an entire chapter to it[1]. The world of the unconscious ("*Die Welt des Unbewussten"*) is presented here within a triad of identical symbols: that of the leg, the scorpion and Molly.

Harry Haller is waiting in an "old-fashioned anteroom" and is not sure whether he's being announced to Matthisson instead of Goethe and there mixes him up again with Buerger, who is the real author of the poem to Molly (Steppenwolf 100-101). Molly represents the figure of Augusta Leonhardt who is believed to have been the younger sister of Gottfried August Buerger's wife. She later became his second wife, but he was madly in love with her during his first marriage. Practically Buerger was married to two women for a period of time giving rise to a lot of commotion (Karalaschwili, 304). It is her leg that Harry Haller wants to grab in his dream before it is transformed into a scorpion. Der Steppenwolf at this point has ambivalent feelings toward

Hermine desiring that side of her which represents *Eros* shying away from the other that signifies *Thanatos*. By evoking the names of the German poets: Buerger and Matthisson, Hesse brings back to mind the difference of opinion between Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller. Matthisson who ,being a total opposite of Buerger, wrote hackneyed poetry, which, nonetheless, earned the praise of Goethe's contemporary, the moralist Schiller (305). It is known that Goethe preferred Buerger, the poet of sensuality ("*Sinnlichkeit")* over Matthisson "whose dryness would sometimes prompt Goethe to mock him" (306). On the basis of Reso Karalaschwili's interpretation another domain of opposites is revealed, that of sensuality and morality. It is in Goethe's laughter that the *coincidentia oppositorum* takes place. Another aspect of the Immortal Goethe becomes manifest to Harry Haller: Goethe laughs and Goethes dances.

Molly prefigures Maria who becomes a bridge between Harry and Hermine, through her, he has to learn how to dance, to nurture the Dionysian. Hermine enlightens him to his stunted character development: "In your case, for example, the spiritual part is very highly developed, and so you are very backward in all the little arts of living. Harry, the thinker, is a hundred years old, but Harry, the dancer, is scarcely half a day old" (Steppenwolf, 139). Maria opens up new vistas to him and as a result he puts aside his suicidal thoughts—not quite:

> There was the loveliness of Maria and her surrender. There was the sweet and subtle sensuous joy of inhaling and tasting a hundred pleasures of the senses that I had only begun to know as an elderly man. I was bathed in sweet joy like a rippling pool. And yet that was only the shell. […] I was busied with the little sweet appealing things of love and sank apparently without a care in the caress of happiness, I was conscious all the while in my heart how my fate raced on at breakneck speed, racing and chasing like a frightened horse, straight for the precipitous abyss, spurred on by dread and longing to the consummation of death. (Steppenwolf, 173)

Harry Haller longs to go beyond death to the realm of the Immortals, to the realm of "ether": "The Immortals, living their life in timeless space, enraptured, refashioned and immersed in a crystalline eternity like ether, and the cool starry brightness and radiant serenityof this world outside the earth…" (171). The idea of "ether" representing the Immortals comes to him through music: Mozart's "Cassations" and Bach's "Well-tempered Clavier."

The Magical Theater, the realm of "Magical Thinking" remains yet closed to him. A ball is its prelude. It is the first Masked Ball that he is to participate in by his being (*"Dasein")* and by his dancing (*"tanzen")*. Prior to the ball, he plunges into meditation going back in time, pondering *Sein(e)(s)geschichte*[2]: "I ate and drank there came over me that feeling of change and decay and of farewell celebrations, that sweet and inwardly painful feeling of being a living part of all the scenes and all the things of earlier life that has never yet been parted from, and the time to part has come." (Steppenwolf, 176). In a moment of intoxication with Being, he feels one with it; he asserts that man has lost his love for inanimate beings calling it sentimentality. He shares thoughts

similar to Siddhartha, who in response to Govinda's disbelief in the inspirational value of what he calls *"Dinge"* (things), says: "The things can be an illusion *("Schein)* or not, as a result I can be an illusion, and these are the likes of me (*"meinesgleichen")*. That is what makes me so loveable and honorable: they are *meinesgleichen*. That is why I can love them." (Hesse, *Siddhartha* 117)

Love is another avenue which once explored lulls the storm of chaos raging within. Harry Haller experiences the exalted state of love once in the Magical Theater: "The capacity for love, in its first youth embraces not only both sexes, but all and everything, sensuous and spiritual, and endows all things with a spell of love and a fairylike ease of transformation such as in later years comes again only to a chosen few and to poets and to them rarely" (185).

This, however, comes after he has had a sense of losing the boundaries of the self and becoming part of the whole in the masked ball which is a prime example of Bakhtin's concept of the carnival "the temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men… and of the prohibitiions of usual life."[3] Harry Haller's sense of the carnivalesque in the ball links it up to an Eckhartian *"Unio Mystica"*, the perfect union of the human and the divine: "… the intoxication of a general festivity, the mysterios merging of the personality in the mass, the mystic union of joy. I had often heard it spoken of […] I had often observed the sparkle *("Leuchten")* in the eye of those who told me of it…"(Hesse, *Steppenwolf* 186-187). The sparkle evokes another Eckhartian concept that of the "spark" (*"Fuenklein")*. "It is where the human spirit and divine spirit become one, for here is the union of the point in the circle of being and the circle's center. Herein the soul takes its whole life and being and from this source it draws its life and being, for this is totally in God" (Eckhart, 108).

The Bakhtinian carnivalesque which implies that the one become part of the all continues into the Magical Theater. Into one of the corridors, he goes, which promises to build up his personality, there he meets a man at the chessboard; upon inquiring who he is, the man says in response: "I am nobody" *("Ich bin niemand")* (Der Steppenwolf, 227). The theme of being "*niemand"* and *"nichts"*("nothing") is once again brought to the fore. The jazz musician Pablo who enlightens him about other aspects of music and is his guide to *"Das Magische Theater"* tells him that he has to cast aside his personality (*"Persoenlichkeit")* in order to be able to gain further access into the Magical Theater. "*Nichts"* is a philosophical concept interpreted by a various number of philosphers. Meister Eckhart's understanding of the term perhaps fits the context of Magical Theater: "What is the pure object of pure letting go? I answer that neither this nor that is the object of pure letting go. It aims at *nothing* and I will tell you why: pure letting go aims at the highest goal in which God can work entirely according to his will" (Eckhart, 258). It is in this nothingness that the divine can express fullness. In *Indischer Lebenslauf*, Dasa wakes out of a lengthy meditation concluding that "Everything was nothing" *("Alles war Nichts")*, and upon that conclusion all his age-old pains and sufferings disappear[4].

Looking at a reflection of himself in the mirror, Harry Haller sees his so-called personality fall apart. This is

the beginning of what people have come to call "schizophrenia," however, according to the expert in the corrdior: "Just as madness (*"Verrueckheit")* is, at a higher level of meaning, the beginning to all wisdom; so is schizophrenia the beginning of all art, all imagination" (Der Steppenwolf, 230). The different components of his self that he sees fall apart, he likens to chess pieces; they remain the same; however, the game can be played out differently each time. That is precisely why he sees his amorous relations unfold in a different way than they actually did in real life, they develop in a manner they could have, had Harry Haller been wiser. His first love, Rosa Kreisler, is the selfsame Rosa Kreisler of his teenage years; this time, on a different plane of existence, he manages to propel the relationship forward, unlike what he let happen some thirty years ago in real life. I say "real," but Hermann Hesse questions the use of this term, especially in *Das Magische Theater* where the boundaries between the imaginary and the real merge, as if becoming one.

Another one of Hermann Hesse's primordial themes, that of rebirth, is conjured up in the Magical Theater where he goes on a shooting spree with his childhood friend Gustav. Both men wish to see the emergence of a new world from the ashes of the old; those who cannot move on are doomed to death. But that is "the beginning of the end," as is the final chapter of *Demian* where Demian in his death along with the destruction of the old system in the hurly-burly of war, signals a new beginning. But we wonder whether Harry Haller has really learnt his lesson and is ready to start anew. Why does he kill his Hermine with whom he felt such a spiritual kinship (*"Seelenverwandschaft").*

Perhaps it was all a dream, a dream of nothingness just like Dasa's, a nothingness full of meaning, full of possibilities, on a different plane of existence.

notes

[1] See: Reso Karalaschwili, "Harry Hallers Goethe-Traum" in Hermann Hesse Charakter und Weltbild. (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993), 298-311.

[2] Harry Haller is reflecting upon his own history (*"Seine geschichte")* which coincides with the history of Being *("Seinsgeschichte").* The more profound sense of "time" is, for Heidegger, bound up with history—not history in the sense of a chronology of events and happenings, but history as the previous itself, as the opening, as that which regions. To think history-as-Being is *Seinsgeschichte*. See: Michael Schwartz, "Epistemes and the History of Being," Foucault and Heidegger Critical Encounters, Eds. Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 167.

[3] Angella Mitchell. CARNIVALESQUE. Fall 2002. University of Georgia. 19 April, 2004. <http://virtual.park.uga.edu/~amitchel/4830_carnival.htm>.

[4] See: Hermann Hesse, "Indischer Lebenslauf" in Aus Indien (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1993), 356.

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THE ZERO SOUL: GODOT'S WAITING SELVES IN DANTE'S WAITING ROOMS
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Dante's concept of neutrality is a compelling metaphor for Beckett's infernal drama. "As the pagan Virgil was recruited as guide by the Christian Dante, so Beckett recruits the Christian Dante as his guide to the post-theological universe he inhabits."[1] In *Waiting for Godot*, a tissue of Dantesque intertextualities reveals Beckett's intricate appropriation of the *Inferno* in terms of space, time, setting and characters. An early, uncollected poem, "Text" engages in an intense dialogue with canto 3, as Beckett was frequently preoccupied with the fate of those excluded from Dante's tripartite system and assigned to its grim vestibule, an austere territory which is neither Hell nor Void. Naturally enough, the poet identifies himself with its inhabitants, the lukewarm, those "scorned by the black ferry / despairing of death / who shall not scour with swift joy / the bright hill's girdle / nor tremble with the dark pride of torture / and the bitter dignity of an ingenious damnation…"[2]

My analysis scrutinises the correspondences between *Godot* and canto 3, the "waiting room" of the *Inferno*, explores the ontological function of the four characters in connection with Dante and analytical psychology, and finally focuses on the emerging model of the immanent, universal soul of contemporary man proposed by the playwright. I will start by clarifying the spatial and thematic connection between canto 3 and Beckett's drama, correlation for which I am indebted to Lois A. Cuddy. In the third canto, between the Gate of Hell and the river Acheron, the pilgrim encounters the neutrals, "the wretched ones, who never were alive" ("Questi sciaurati, che mai non fur vivi," *Inf.* 3.64). Commentators usually speak of *vili* (vile souls), *cattivi* (wicked souls), *miseri* and *tristi* (wretched souls), and most agree they are *ignavi* (cowards). Michele Barbi calls them *pusillanimi* (pusillanimous souls[3]), while Charles Singleton defines them as "lukewarm"[4]. They are "the miserable people, those who have lost the good of their intellect" ("le genti dolorose / c'hanno perduto il ben de l'intelletto"; *Inf.* 3.17-8). Instead of using their "intellect" in making their own choices in life, they did nothing but followed whoever promised to provide security. Estragon admits in act 1: "Don't let's do anything. It's safer." (12B), and later on Vladimir concludes: "We're in no danger of ever thinking any more." (41B) Their sin was cowardice and passivity: they never thought for themselves, they never had a conscience and never made choices. As Maria Picchio Simonelli underlines: "There is no doubt that the sin punished in the Ante-Inferno is cowardice" which "represents a degeneration of the human condition itself."[5] Because they never took part in either good or evil, they cannot go to Hell, Purgatory or Paradise. In order to awaken their dead conscience, in the afterlife they are stung by horseflies and wasps. Because they remained unrepentant about their passivity, they are forced to spend eternity outside the Hell of active punishment. All this indicates the location and the thematic context of *Godot*.

Beckett's version of Dante's third canto is as ingenious as his portrayal of Belacqua in his early work, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932*)* and the collection of short stories *More Pricks than Kicks* (1934). Through Belacqua Shuah, the alter-ego of the Florentine lute-maker, he depicted a state of indolence that

did not exclude free will. The figure of Belacqua, idly resting in the boulder's shadow will recur as a leitmotif throughout the Beckettian *oeuvre*. Walter A. Strauss argues that in *Godot,* "the Dantean figure has been metamorphosed into two tramps, Gogo and Didi – *clochards* in the true sense of the word."[6] Belacqua's favourite position appears episodically in *Godot*'s act 2, where Estragon's posture is reminiscent of Dante's apathetic hero: "He resumes his foetal posture, his head between his legs." (45). Being in the womb visualises the utopian state of the atom in the void. The image of the unborn foetus is suggestive of the serene security fervently sought by the Beckettian protagonist caught in the agonising cycle of life and death. While Dante's neutrals foolishly pursue anything that would bring meaning or salvation, Beckett's heroes endlessly wait for the moment of epiphany, for supreme liberation. While Dante's sinners are invariably stung by insects, Beckett has envisioned miscellaneous alternative punishments: occasional beatings, bladder problems, neck and head sores, festering wounds, aching feet. Steven Carter recognises here the Homeric archetype of the homeless man. He subsequently traces Estragon's wound to Achilles' and Odysseus' scar, as well as Tristan's (*Tristan and Iseult*) and Captain Ahab's (*Moby Dick*)[7].

Unlike Dante who distantly observes his ante-infernal sinners and at this point does not distinguish particular individuals, Beckett deals with specific protagonists and perplexing onomastic techniques. The names of his characters have an international echo, suggesting that they represent not just individuals but humanity in its entirety: Estragon (French), Vladimir (Russian), Pozzo (Italian), Lucky (English). Beckett will follow a similar procedure in *Endgame*, as pointed out by several critics, where one character is the "hammer" and the other three the "nails": Hamm (hammer, English), Clov (clou, French), Nell (nello, Italian), Nagg (Nagel, German). To confirm the assumption that we deal with a sample of universal humanity, Vladimir launches a heavy verdict in act 2: "But at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or not" (51).

In the first act, when asked by Pozzo what his name is, Estragon answers: "Adam" (25). In the second act, Estragon calls Pozzo with the names Abel and Cain (53B). Having in mind Erich Auerbach's famous study "Figura," the use of biblical names suggests that the characters are a *figura* of the first men on earth, foreshadowing the celestial people yet to be. Eden and Golgotha point to each other. Estragon is a *figura* of Adam, who in turn is a *figura* of Christ. Estragon confesses in act 1: "All my life I've compared myself to him" (34B). Vladimir and Estragon can also appear as a *figuratio* of the two-thieves principle, while Pozzo and Lucky are a *figuratio* of the fratricidal pair Abel and Cain, of the master and slave principle.

The nicknames Gogo and Didi are possibly formed by the repetition of the verbs go and *dire* in the imperative, as indicated by Ruby Cohn, therefore proposing the dichotomy go–say, movement-speech, action-utterance. One prefers to move and the other chooses to just utter words, one is fascinated with his boots, which suggests a terrestrial association, the other one with his hat, alluding to a spiritual link. The inability to commit themselves to any cause beyond their own self interest leads to inaction and nonsensical speech. It is an ironic inversion, as the two are neither active nor eloquent. Moreover, action is dissimulated in speech.

There are many literal connections between canto 3 and *Godot*. Estragon invites his companion: "Tell me about the worms!" (39B). The casual request functions as an instant reminder of the repellent worms covering the ground of Ante-Inferno which feed on the blood and tears of the sinners: "The insects streaked their faces with their blood, / which, mingled with their tears, fell at their feet, / where it was gathered up by sickening worms" (*Inf.* 3.67-70). Like Dante's neutrals who are familiar with the infernal "bloodred light" ("una luce vermiglia"; *Inf.* 3.134) across the Acheron, Didi is also aware of Hell's colour, while Gogo pretends not to notice it:

> VLADIMIR: But down there everything is red!
> ESTRAGON (exasperated): I didn't notice anything, I tell you! (40)

Many further references allude to damnation and the Inferno, as the characters relive the ambivalence of neutrality. For Vladimir, the only certainty is "nothing" as "Nothing is certain" (10B) or, in the words of Democritus, "Nothing is more real that nothing." Estragon bellows: "I'm in Hell" (47B) and later Vladimir shouts: "Go to Hell" (52B). In this infernal realm where even laugh is prohibited they have lost all their "rights" as human beings.

> ESTRAGON: We've no rights any more?
> *Laugh of Vladimir, stifled as before, less the smile.*
> VLADIMIR: You'd make me laugh if it wasn't prohibited.
> ESTRAGON: We've lost our rights?
> VLADIMIR: *(distinctly)*. We got rid of them. (13B)

Gogo and Didi are and are not in Hell, their physical location being ambiguous: "VLADIMIR: And where were you yesterday? ESTRAGON: How should I know? In another compartment. There's no lack of void" (42B). The space boundaries appear to be blurred, unlike the ones of the Ante-Inferno. "The sorry souls of those who lived without disgrace and without praise" ("L'anime triste di coloro che visser sanza 'nfamia e sanza lodo"; *Inf.* 3.35-6) are assigned a specific location for their eternal punishment and can never move to another compartment in proper Hell or Purgatory. For our heroes too, the possibility of inhabiting another subdivision is doubtful and illusory. The only certain definition of their place of residence is 'nothing': "It's indescribable. It's like nothing" (55B), it is a land of "sighs, lamentations and loud cries" (*Inf.* 3.22). Lamentations are recurrent throughout the play, as all the characters keep complaining and lamenting. Vladimir is exasperated: "Will you stop whining? I've had about my bellyful of your lamentations!" (46). They have been in this place an indefinite length of time: "fifty years maybe" (35) or "a million years" (7B) as "time has stopped" (24B), and all their life experiences have elapsed, they are "all dead and buried" (35). Like in Dante's eternal realm, time has no significance and the sinner can only have a "retrospective vision upon his earthly self."[8] Estragon too refers to his life in the past:

> VLADIMIR: You should have been a poet.

ESTRAGON: I was. Isn't that obvious? (9)

For Dante's damned also, memory is the only link to earthly life. In the realm of timeless being, the protagonists can only recall essential fragments of their past, they are blind to the present but can see in the future, as revealed in the Farinata-Cavalcante episode of canto 10. Didi and Gogo, because they are denied entry into Hell, they are also denied the capacity to foretell the future, and their memory plays endless tricks on them. When Pozzo declares "I am blind" - Estragon sarcastically infers: "Perhaps he can see into the future" (54B). However, none of Beckett's protagonists has acquired this capacity yet, their blindness appears to be total. "Those who are here can place no hope in death, / and their blind life is so abject that they are envious of every other fate" (*Inf.* 3.46-8).

As A. C. Charity has shown, in the *Divine Comedy* "the analogy between sin and punishment is direct and often so vivid that the latter is seen to consist in the perpetual continuance of the sin itself, now transformed to torment through the disintegration of man's proper personality"[9], as free will and "il ben dell'intelletto" (*Inf.* 3.18) are completely lost.

> ESTRAGON: Use your intelligence, can't you?
> *Vladimir uses his intelligence*.
> VLADIMIR: *(finally)*. I remain in the dark." (12B)

The law of the *contrappasso* allows the sins to perpetuate themselves with a "monotonous intensity". Like Dante's infernal dwellers, Didi and Gogo are "fixed forever in a single context." Erich Auerbach clarifies that: "it is precisely the absolute realisation of a particular earthly personality in the place definitively assigned to it, which constitutes the Divine Judgement."[10] Didi and Gogo are now beyond the choices that might alter their existence in the afterworld. We now "behold an intensified image of the essence of their being,"[11] which is the state of neutrality, of passivity, of in-between life and death. They always try to find a way to perpetuate the illusion of existence (44B), while isolating themselves from the "corpses" and "skeletons" (41B) around them, the other dead who make noises like "feathers", "leaves", "sand", "ashes" (40B), echoing the "strange utterances, horrible pronouncements, /accents of anger, words of suffering, / and voices shrill and faint, and beating hands- / all went to make a tumult that will whirl / forever through that turbid, timeless air, like sand that eddies when a whirlwind swirls" (*Inf.* 3.25-30):

> ESTRAGON: All the dead voices.
> VLADIMIR: They make a noise like wings.
> ESTRAGON: Like leaves.
> VLADIMIR: Like sand.
> ESTRAGON: Like leaves.   *Silence.*

VLADIMIR: They all speak at once.
ESTRAGON: Each one to itself.   *Silence.*
VLADIMIR: Rather they whisper.
ESTRAGON: They rustle.
VLADIMIR: They murmur.
ESTRAGON: They rustle.   *Silence.*
VLADIMIR: What do they say?
ESTRAGON: They talk about their lives.
VLADIMIR: To have lived is not enough for them.
ESTRAGON: They have to talk about it.
VLADIMIR: To be dead is not enough for them.
ESTRAGON: It is not sufficient.   *Silence*. (40)

Only dialogue provides the impression of existence. Discussing their lives is the only possible activity. Vladimir's invitation to spring into action highlights again the dichotomy speech-action: "Let us not waste our time in idle discourse! (*Pause. Vehemently.*) Let us do something while we have the chance!" (51) But, as they are waiting for Godot to come, words will be the only surrogate for action. Vladimir acknowledges: "What are we doing here, that is the question. And we are blessed in this, that we happen to know the answer. Yes, in this immense confusion one thing alone is clear. We are waiting for Godot to come" (51B.) Like Dante's neutrals, who waited for direction from others, Didi and Gogo wait for Godot to show them the way and to pronounce the verdict for eternity. They are "tied to Godot" (14B), to their desire for certainty, to their hope of salvation or damnation. He can either take the form of Christ, the "Holy Saviour", or that of "Caron dimonio", Charon, the demon with eyes like embers and white hair (*Inf*. 3.83) recalling Godot's white beard (59). Charon, by accepting the souls in his boat across the Acheron pronounces a judgement *avant la lettre:* that of acceptance into Hell proper; the dreadful Minos, later on, in the second circle, will assign the soul's level of punishment by wrapping his tail around himself. Didi and Gogo are confused about their identities, and they struggle to distinguish between themselves and the sinners around them. They expect to be saved or taken across the river Acheron, like the damned souls surrounding them, the "dead voices". But after Pozzo and Lucky leave on their journey to the market, they find themselves again alone: "In an instant all will vanish and will be alone once more, in the midst of nothingness" (52).

"One day we were born, one day we shall die, the same day, the same second, is that not enough for you? (*Calmer.*) They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it's night once more" (57B). Pozzo's articulate vision was seen by Katherine H. Burkman as the true epiphany of the play, a glimpse into the sacred void. Like Pozzo, Vladimir has a visionary moment. He recognises that the individual is a transitory link in the universal chain of life and death, of birth into this world and death into the other realm. Life and historical time are ephemeral while mythical time is eternal.

"Astride of a grave and a difficult birth. Down in the hole, lingeringly, the gravedigger puts on the forceps. We have time to grow old. The air is full of our cries. (*He listens.*) But habit is a great deadener. *(He looks again at Estragon.)* At me too someone is looking, of me too someone is saying, he is sleeping, he knows nothing, let him sleep on. *(Pause.)* I can't go on!" (58-58B)

Lucky is also preoccupied with serious concerns, hidden under carnavalesque motifs and an increasingly deteriorating syntax. In his disjointed tirade in a *coq-à-l'âne* format that gives the impression of circular movement of language and attempts to recapture the lost 'true' voice, "Lucky turns traditional patterns of reasoned discourse and theological debate into farce."[12] Preoccupation with salvation or damnation also pervades the following dialogue:

> VLADIMIR: …Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One-
> ESTRAGON: Our what?
> VLADIMIR: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other . . . *(he searches for the contrary of saved)* ... damned.
> ESTRAGON: Saved from what?
> VLADIMIR: Hell.
> ESTRAGON: I'm going. *He does not move*. (9)

When asked about the theme of *Godot*, Beckett referred to St. Augustine's comment on the crucifixions of the two thieves from the Gospel of Luke: "Do not despair: one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume: one of the thieves was damned."[13] Beckett acknowledged on several occasions the beauty of this thought and its linguistic form[14]: "I am interested in the shape of ideas even when I do not believe in them… that sentence has a wonderful shape. It is the shape that matters."[15] According to Bert States, *Godot* primarily deals with the idea posed by the parable of the two thieves, "with the odds or 'percentages' of salvation versus damnation for the race"[16], which is the theme of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, as well as that of the Scriptures.

Their refusal to face reality in life has put off repentance and deferred salvation. Vladimir partially remembers Solomon's words: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh it is a tree of life." Interestingly enough, the word "heart" is replaced by "something" (8). Their present punishment concerns the whole of humankind who committed "the original and eternal sin… the sin of having been born."[17] Beckett restates the Dantesque paradigm of retribution in its essential form. Salvation can be attained only by stepping out of the cycle of life and death. The fact of being in our contemporary world condemns us to mortality, to endless reiterations of infernal punishments. The *Inferno* frames the condition of terrestrial life in general and particularly of modern existence, with its disintegration of intellect and man's incapacity of making choices.

> VLADIMIR: Suppose we repented.
> ESTRAGON: Repented what?

VLADIMIR: Oh . . . (He reflects.) We wouldn't have to go into the details.
ESTRAGON: Our being born? (8B)

The dialogue and structure of the play "becomes circular, like the topography of the Inferno,"[18] as the play is marked by the principle of repetition. The impression that there is no way out of eternal hell is reinforced by the circular song of the dog who stole an egg, at the start of the second act, that can be repeated endlessly: "A dog came in the kitchen and stole a crust of bread…"[19] (37, 37B). The ending of the two acts is similar, with the only difference that the two speakers, Vladimir and Estragon, interchange lines: "Well? Shall we go? / Yes, let's go. *They do not move*" (35B, 60B). The self reaches a still point, outside history, space and time through concentric and repetitive speech. Binary oppositions are neutralised. The circular structure of the play epitomises the soul's aspiration towards a state of immanence and wholeness. Circular movement can ultimately have the power of transforming hell into wholeness of being.

The protagonists' circular conversational patterns and ludic dialogue echo the medieval French farces. In Edith Kern's view, these circular verbal games taking the form of semi-playful, semi-serious insults may be termed as medieval *flyting*. According to Johan Huizinga, this *flyting* has its source in ancient "slanging matches" that may go back to the very origin of theatre. The exchange of insults may also echo the exchanges among the wrathful of the fifth circle. The mud through which Estragon metaphorically crawls, "all my lousy life I've crawled about in the mud" (39B), recalls once more the fifth circle, where Dante met the mad, the "muddy people in that bog, all naked and with looks of rage" (*Inf.* 7.109-11). As Estragon concludes: "We are all born mad. Some remain so" (51B).

Godot appears to many commentators as a lesser God, a trivial subversion of the omnipotent divinity. The name juxtaposes the sacred and the profane, "as it links the Anglo-Saxon word God with the French suffix –*ot* that abases and makes laughable any name it is attached to."[20] Frederick Busi sees the four characters as Godot who has arrived. Esslin points out that Godeau was a character with a similar function in Balzac's play *Le faiseur*, also known as *Mercadet*. According to Ruby Cohn, Beckett himself told Roger Blin that the name Godot derived from French slang words for boot – *godillot, godasse* – possibly emphasising the link with the earthly realm, while playing on the ambiguity of Godot's earthly/heavenly nature. The Boy, supposed to be a divine messenger that helps the protagonists cross a difficult threshold, is in any case the catalyst of the process of waiting while perpetuating their futile hope. As Estragon notices at his first visit, he is pale from the weariness of "climbing heaven and gazing on the likes of us" (34B).

Pozzo and Lucky could pertain to the second category of inhabitants of the antechamber of the Inferno, the "coward angels" who "were not rebels nor faithful to their God[21], but stood apart" ("il cattivo coro / de li angeli che non furon ribelli / né fur fedeli a Dio, ma per sé fuoro" (*Inf.* 3.37-9). Didi admonishes Pozzo for the same deficiency of being self-centered: "He can think of nothing but himself." (53) Pozzo sobs, discussing Lucky's transformation from angel into demon: "He used to be so kind…so helpful…and entertaining…my

good angel…and now…he's killing me." (23) Angelic choirs are traditionally associated with delicate clouds. Estragon invites his companion to perceive the "little cloud" in the zenith in connection to Pozzo and Lucky. ESTRAGON: "He's all humanity. *(Silence.)* Look at the little cloud" (54). As usual, the former sentence affirms what the latter contradicts, Pozzo's human quality has an angelic dimension. Pozzo's laughter reinforces the ambiguity about his human nature, when he comments: "You are human beings none the less… Of the same species as myself. *(He bursts into an enormous laugh.)* Of the same species as Pozzo! Made in God's image!" (15B) The uncertainty and ambivalence of their divine/profane nature remains consistent. Pozzo and Lucky's deterioration in act 2 can be interpreted as an accentuation, a highlighting of their essential selves, of their fundamental characteristics in the earthly life: Pozzo's blind, controlling vision and Lucky's dumb, vacuous talk. "It is not really a change but rather a becoming manifest of what was there before."[22] Lois A. Cuddy suggests that originally, Lucky and Pozzo would have been terrestrial beings, and then, through repentance eventually become angels in the Afterworld. They subsequently fell from grace, as they remained neutral and stood apart. Didi underlines that: "The two of you slipped. (Pause.) And fell." (56) They could have been the coward angels relegated to Ante-Inferno for witnessing the battle between Lucifer and God without taking sides. "The heavens, that their beauty not be lessened, / have cast them out, nor will deep Hell receive them- / even the wicked cannot glory in them." (*Inf*. 3.40-2)

This interpretation however does not take into consideration a detail in the French version of *Godot*, where it is indicated that Pozzo takes Lucky to the Market of the Holy Saviour[23] ("le marché du Saint-Sauveur"). This detail forces us to see that judgement was performed on Pozzo and Lucky, and necessitates an explanation as to why their fate was different from the one shared by the other inhabitants of the Ante-Inferno. When Pozzo and Lucky return from the place of judgement, the former is blind, the latter dumb, as one appears to be punished for deformed vision, the other one for chaotic logos. Pozzo's statement: "I woke up one fine day as blind as Fortune" (55B) is another reference to Dante. We can argue that their physical punishment reflects their earthly sins, previous to becoming angels. The changelessness mode seems to have broken, as the physical state of the two alters considerably from the first to their second encounter with the lukewarm Didi and Gogo. At this point we leave for a while the Dantesque grounds. In order to determine the identity of Pozzo and Lucky, I will rely on Jungian theories of the self. According to Eva Metman, "Beckett leads us into a deep regression from all civilised tradition, in which consciousness sinks back into an earlier state of its development,"[24] to its ground zero, to the dissolution of the conscious personality into its functional components. Jung compares this inward regression to a descent into Hell. *Godot'*s infernal characters appear as the four archetypal components of contemporary man, a dismembered human image of the modern world.

Martin Esslin and other commentators have pointed out that Didi (the practical one) and Gogo (the poet), as well as Pozzo (master) and Lucky (slave), on a more primitive level, have complementary personalities. I would argue that the two pairs reflect the two possible ways of living life: the active (Pozzo and Lucky) and the contemplative (Estragon and Vladimir), one awake and one in a state of twilight, one anchored in reality

(extrovert), the other removed from reality (introvert). Pozzo is supposedly able to decipher the twilight for the benefit of his companions: "I have talked to them about this and that, I have explained the twilight, admittedly" (26).

Most of Beckett's protagonists can only function in pairs: Hamm and Clov, Nagg and Nell of *Endgame*, Winnie and Willie of *Happy Days*, Bom and Pim of *How it is,* Mercier and Camier, again echoing Dante's famous couples: Paolo and Francesca, Ulysses and Diomedes, Count Ugolino and Archbishop Ruggieri. The Beckettian protagonists are "glued two by two together,"[25] and take turns in acting as tormentor and tormented. In the case of Didi and Gogo the roles are interchangeable. As for Pozzo and Lucky, their roles seem to be fixed, only to be partly reversed in act 2, where Lucky is actually guiding Pozzo. Their progress from one role to another is reminiscent of the semicircular movement of the avaricious and the prodigal in the fourth circle of the *Inferno*, who clash together when they meet.

In *Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce,* Beckett insists on the symbolism of the number three in Dante's *Comedy*. Beckett himself had a similar preoccupation, according to James Knowlson's *Light and Darkness in the Theatre of Samuel Beckett.* Knowlson argues that, for instance, Murphy pictures his mind in terms of three zones: hellish light, hellish half-light, darkness*.*

With *Godot,* we witness the abandonment of the trinity in favour of a quaternity, shaped by the two couples. Moreover, the four Beckettian characters form a quaternity inscribed in a circle, a *quadratura circuli* or mandala. According to Carl Jung, the quaternity is an archetype of universal occurrence, and is also a valid pattern in analytic psychology. As Jung explains in *Psychology and Religion*, the mandala is the ultimate reconciling symbol, it expresses completeness and union of the four elements or archetypes of the psyche, it unites the wholeness of the celestial circle and the squareness of the earth, God and man. Mandalas are unconsciously summoned up in periods of crisis and have the therapeutic effect of re-establishing balance and order. As Susan D. Brienza indicated, in a later mime, *Quad* (parts *I* and *II*, 1981-2) the four characters rhythmically draw mandala pictures that reveal concentric circles and include four quadrants. They desperately attempt to achieve "centering" and reinstate order and peace.

The four archetypal personalities or the four aspects of the soul are grouped in two pairs: the ego and the shadow, the persona and the soul's image (animus or anima). The shadow is the container of all our despised emotions repressed by the ego. Lucky, the shadow serves as the polar opposite of the egocentric Pozzo, prototype of prosperous mediocrity, who incessantly controls and persecutes his subordinate, thus symbolising the oppression of the unconscious shadow by the despotic ego. Lucky's monologue in act 1 appears as a manifestation of a stream of repressed unconsciousness, as he is allowed to "think" for his master. Estragon's name has another connotation, besides that of the aromatic herb, tarragon: "estragon" is a cognate of estrogen, the female hormone[26]. This prompts us to identify him with the anima, the feminine

image of Vladimir's soul. It explains Estragon's propensity for poetry, his sensitivity and dreams, his irrational moods. Vladimir appears as the complementary masculine principle, or perhaps the rational persona of the contemplative type. A possible interpretation emerges: the Pozzo-Lucky couple parodies the average, collective ego (Pozzo), and its shadow (Lucky), representatives of an invalid normality, while the other couple, the persona and image of the contemplative soul of the poet, which is above the average: Vladimir (persona) and his feminine counterpart, Estragon (anima). The four archetypes of the psyche re-establish a traditional prototype for the modern consciousness as a mix between the active and contemplative types, between the Western and Eastern models, between the "historical vision of humanity seen as the perpetuation of Cain and Abel," and the timeless, "non-historical humanity of the two tramps,"[27] associated with the highly developed spirit of the meditative poet and with Jesus, the most accomplished archetype of the self.

"Everything is dead, but the tree…" (59B). The tree by which Vladimir and Estragon are supposed to encounter Godot recalls the Edenic tree of life or the cross – the only symbol that comes alive in the midst of the deserted landscape of this Ante-Inferno. It is the only visible emblem of our four characters, itself a quaternity, the central point around which all four gravitate, the symbol of the self placed at the centre of the mandala. As Jung acknowledges, "the central Christian symbol, the Cross, is unmistakably a quaternity."[28] In the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the tree of knowledge is a pre-figuration of the cross: "What was lost through the tree of knowledge was redeemed through the tree of the cross."[29] In act 2, Didi and Gogo "do the tree" which can be defined as "doing the cross". Ruby Cohn suggested that this was a version of a yoga exercise.

> VLADIMIR: You're right. (Pause.) Let's just do the tree, for the balance.
> ESTRAGON: The tree?
> *Vladimir does the tree, staggering about on one leg.*
> VLADIMIR: *(stopping).* Your turn.
> *Estragon does the tree, staggers.*
> ESTRAGON: Do you think God sees me?
> VLADIMIR: You must close your eyes.
> *Estragon closes his eyes, staggers worse.*
> ESTRAGON: *(stopping, brandishing his fists, at the top of his voice.)* God have pity on me!
> VLADIMIR: *(vexed).* And me?
> ESTRAGON: On me! On me! Pity! On me!   (49-49B)

The two tramps re-enact the crucifixion scene, in the attempt of attracting the final divine judgement that would sentence them to proper Hell or possibly, would grant salvation. Their supplication to God echoes the thief's appeal to Christ for mercy. According to St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, the cross symbolises a judgement place: "Nevertheless even the cross itself, if thou considerest it well, was a judgement seat; for the Judge being set up in the middle, one thief who believed was delivered, the other who reviled was condemned."[30]

Vladimir and Estragon, the contemplative archetypes (focussing on the speculative mode of knowing) envision the judgement place where they are, while Pozzo and Lucky, the more primitive, active archetypes (pursuing the experiential mode of knowing) embark on a journey in space to meet their judgement. While judgement occurs in the second case, it will be deferred endlessly for the first pair.

Pozzo and Lucky are tied to their journey in time and space, to movement, to Purgatory, while the other two to the stasis of the Inferno. Unlike Didi and Gogo, Pozzo consults his watch repeatedly and seems to follow a schedule (24B, 25). The opposition stasis-movement emerges as central to Beckett's definition of the two realms: "In the absolute absence of the Absolute, Hell is the static lifelessness of unrelieved viciousness. Paradise the static lifelessness of unrelieved immaculation. Purgatory a flood of movement and vitality released by the conjunction of these two elements."[31] Belacqua (impersonated by Didi and Gogo) is reported - by Benvenuto da Imola (ca. 1375) and Anonimo Fiorentino (ca. 1400) - to have replied to Dante's reproaches with Aristotle's dictum: "Sedendo et quiescendo, anima efficitur sapiens." Aristotle's words "are in praise of the contemplative life, which throughout the Middle Ages was the highest goal, the life closest to God."[32] If, during the Middle Ages, contemplative life was an acceptable excuse for indolence, in Beckett's era it is punished with Ante-Inferno. Paradoxically, the primitive, average life of the other couple is punished with Ante-Purgatory. The two vestibules coincide for a brief moment.

"The multiplicity of references to the *Divina Commedia* frequently provokes the desire to identify individual works with one realm or the other. And yet, because reference to both may coexist in a single work, no direct and consistent parallel can be maintained,"[33] and all sources are blended in the integral consistency of Beckett's *oeuvre*. "Must we wring the neck of a certain system in order to stuff it into a contemporary pigeon-hole for the satisfaction of the analogymongers? Literary criticism is not book-keeping."[34] However, our disposition to devise theories and detect symbols incessantly produces an array of analogies. Although the ones presented here might appear to some extent vulnerable, there is enough textual evidence that Dante is unequivocally present in the Beckettian play as well as the unique sub/version of his concept of neutrality - once again revealing Beckett's lifetime dialogue with the Florentine poet. As the Dantesque model shapes Joyce's entire *oeuvre*, according to Joseph Campbell, Dante provides once more the inevitable background for Beckett's writing. Christopher Ricks, among many, acknowledges that "from first to last, Dante was crucial to the author whose final days at the end of 1989 were spent with a copy of *The Divine Comedy*."[35]

The Dantesque intertextuality reasserts that Beckett's text, lacking in defined boundaries, is open to a plurality of interpretations. There is no ultimate key to the play, as the Beckettian text refuses to fit any patterns or systems. It contains a multitude of possible symbols and lends itself to a great number of interpretations concomitantly valid and invalid. For instance, I will mention two controversial ones, one based on a quaternity, the other on a trinity. According to Guy Christian Barnard, Beckett's four characters can be associated with William Blake's four Zoas or functions of the psyche, outlined in his *Prophetic Books*: Imagination (Estragon),

Thought (Lucky), Feeling (Vladimir), Sensation (Pozzo). Man's fall arose because these functions could not maintain a harmonious balance and warred against each other. Barnard maintains that Beckett provides a different version of the same conflict within the split psyche. In a quite different vein, Bernard Dukore develops a triadic theory in "Didi, Gogo and the absent Godot," based on Freud's trinitarian description of the psyche in "The Ego and the Id" (1923) and the usage of onomastic techniques. Dukore defines the characters by what they lack: the rational Go-go embodies the incomplete ego, the missing pleasure principle: (e)go-(e)go. Di-di (id-id) - who is more instinctual and irrational - is seen as the backward id or subversion of the rational principle. Godot fulfils the function of the superego or moral standards. Pozzo and Lucky are just re-iterations of the main protagonists. Dukore finally sees Beckett's play as a metaphor for the futility of man's existence when salvation is expected from an external entity, and the self is denied introspection. Subsequently, *Endgame* underwent the same type of analysis: Clov was identified with the ego, Hamm with the id and Nagg and Nell, the parental authority, with the superego. I will conclude by returning to the present interpretation, equally in/valid.

Beckett's text works indefatigably against our need for distinct meaning and logical interpretation. The play is a fusion of opposites, or a subversion of one by the other, it merges tragedy and comedy, anguish and exhilaration, doom and salvation, division and synthesis of the four partitions of the circle. It oscillates between two poles, or juxtaposes them: self and other, memory and oblivion, motion and stasis, progress and regress, presence and absence, zero and wholeness, totality and nothingness. The zero encapsulates a totality, it is symbolised by a circle and represents the completion of the cycle of life. Beckett dramatises the impossibility of unity while celebrating the existence of the one as the other side of the zero. The four parts of the self are reshaped "into a collage/montage which is itself the 'degree zero' of psychic unity and semantic plurality."[36] Beckett's neutrals aspire to the point zero where all difference is neutralised and wholeness is attained. Just as Dante uses Satan's fall from heaven, which created the Mountain of Purgatory on the other side of earth, as the means by which humankind can return to heaven, Beckett uses the parable of the zero soul as a means by which the reader/spectator can retrace the path to wholeness.

Beckett inverts the Sartrian notion that: "modern man's inability, or refusal, to make choices defines his Hell,"[37] by suggesting that precisely the refusal to make choices can lead to ultimate transcendence. The annihilation of the evil will and the purging of desire can be beneficent. Neutrality is a punishable sin as well as a first step outside the cycle of life. Being unrepentant about one's passivity acquires a heroic quality. Non-action, losing the "good of the intellect", neutralising the will power, getting rid of all social rights and constraints instils a sense of calm, of integration of the self within the cosmos.

Beckett's drama emerges as a ritual preparation for the journey beyond life and death. At a second glance, Gogo and Didi's Ante-Inferno appears as a reward and not a punishment, an elevated mental space of waiting for spiritual rebirth. Their "sin" stimulates ritual regeneration and not the degeneration of their human

condition. The lukewarm, scorned by life and death have the chance to exit the endless cycle of incarnation and excarnation. Pozzo and Lucky's Ante-Purgatory emerges as the real damnation within the inescapable cycle – disintegration followed by physical rebirth. Dante's concept of neutrality is subverted, the grim waiting room becomes a necessary stage in the process of individuation and renewal.

Through the re-enactment on stage of a modern mandala within a Dantesque frame, Beckett's play provides not just a metaphor for our existence, but acquires a metaphysical quality of transformation and regeneration. It conjures up spiritual rebirth while performing a ritual of inner descent to the central point zero or wholeness of being. In times of crisis, Beckett attempts the healing of the modern soul by summoning up old archetypes, which have the therapeutic effect of re-establishing balance and order. As usual, Beckett's audience is confronted with a paradox: as they behold four clownish tramps, dissociated and neutralised fragments of humanity on the verge of disintegration, they are magically placed within a protective circle. Instead of leaving the spectator or reader vulnerable and depressed, the playwright's stern, agonising vision often provokes quite the opposite effect. The reconciling vision of the mandala provides a feeling of harmony and guides us inwards and downwards to the ultimate centre of our self.

notes

[1] Hugh Haughton, "Purgatory Regained? Dante and Late Beckett" *Dante's Modern Afterlife. Reception and Response from Blake to Heaney.* Ed. Nick Havely (New York: Macmillan Press, 1998) 142.

[2] Samuel Beckett, "Text", quoted by Lawrence E. Harvey, *Samuel Beckett; poet and critic* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970) 287.

[3] In *Problemi di critica dantesca: Seconda serie, 1930-1937,* Michele Barbi indicates that at the root of *viltà* (cowardice) lies pusillanimity. The latter constitutes the cause, while the former is only the effect.

[4] *The Divine Comedy*, translated with a commentary by Charles S. Singleton, vol. 1. *Inferno*, part 2: *Commentary* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970)

[5] Maria Picchio Simonelli, *Inferno III* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1993) 5.

[6] Walter A. Strauss, "Dante's Belacqua and Beckett's Tramps," *Comparative Literature* 11 (1959): 255.

[7] Steven Carter, "Estragon's Ancient Wound: A Note on *Waiting for Godot,*" *Journal of Beckett Studies* 6.1 (1997): 125-33.

[8] Thomas M. Greene, "Dramas of Selfhood in the *Comedy,*" *From Time to Eternity*, ed. Thomas G. Bergin (New Haven: Yale UP, 1967) 104.

[9] A. C. Charity, *Events and Their Afterlife. The Dialectics of Christian Typology in the Bible and Dante (*Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1966) 190.

[10] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis. The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968) 193.

[11] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis,* 192.

[12] Edith Kern, "Beckett's Modernity and Medieval Affinities," *Critical Essays on Samuel Beckett,* ed. Patrick A. McCarthy (Boston: G. K. Hall & co., 1986) 149.

[13] Mentioned in an interview with Harold Hobson, "Samuel Beckett: Dramatist of the Year," *International Theatre Annual* 1 (London: John Calder, 1956): 153-5; also discussed by Ruby Cohn, "Waiting," *Critical Essays on Samuel Beckett,* ed. Patrick A. McCarthy (Boston: G. K.

Hall & co., 1986) 155.

[14] See David Green "A Note on Augustine's Thieves" *Journal of Beckett Studies* 3.2 (1994): 77-8. Green suggests that "a conflation of the judgement of the thieves and the admonition of tractate XLIX occurred sometimes after Augustine," as Augustine's comment has a different shape from that recalled by Beckett.

[15] Samuel Beckett, quoted by Martin Esslin, "The Search for the Self," *Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 33.

[16] Bert O. States, "The Language of Myth," *Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 79.

[17] Samuel Beckett, *Proust* (London: Calder, 1965) 67.

[18] Michael Robinson, "From Purgatory to Inferno: Beckett and Dante Revisited" *Journal of Beckett Studies* 5 (1979): 78.

[19] It is similar to a song that appears in Brecht's *Drums in the Night* (1923). Also see Hans Mayer "Brecht, Beckett und ein Hund," TH 13.6 (1972): 25-7.

[20] Edith Kern, "Beckett's Modernity and Medieval Affinities," 151.

[21] Beckett explicitly talks about "those nor for God nor for his enemies" in *For to end yet again and other fizzles* (London: Calder, 1976) 12.

[22] Eva Metman, "Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays," *Samuel Beckett. A Collection of Critical Essays,* ed. Martin Esslin (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965) 123.

[23] Martin Esslin, *Theatre of the Absurd* (New York: Anchor Books, 1961) 21.

[24] Eva Metman, "Reflections on Samuel Beckett's Plays," 129.

[25] Samuel Beckett, *How it is* (London: Calder, 1964) 121.

[26] Pointed out by Steven Carter in "Estragon's Ancient Wound," 130.

[27] Walter A. Strauss, "Dante's Belacqua and Beckett's Tramps," 257.

[28] "The Problem of the Fourth," *C.G. Jung on Evil,* ed. Murray Stein (London: Routledge, 1995) 53.

[29] *Gospel of Nicodemus*, ed. Rémi Gounelle and Zbigniew Izydorczyk (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997) 199.

[30] The Latin may be found in Tractate XXXI, Section II. *Cursus Completus Patrologiae Latinae Tomus XXXV*, S. Aurelius Augustinus (Parisiis: Apud Garnier fratres editores, 1902) English: Saint Augustin. *Homilies on the Gospel according to St. John and his first Epistle* (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1848-9)

[31] Samuel Beckett, "Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce," *A Samuel Beckett Reader,* ed. Richard W. Seaver (New York: Grove Press, 1992) 125-6. For a detailed discussion of Beckett's three realms see Katharine Worth "Heaven, Hell and the Space Between," *Samuel Beckett's Theatre. Life Journeys* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999) 48-65.

[32] Daniella Caselli, "Looking It Up in My Big Dante: A Note on "Sedendo et Quiescendo," *Journal of Beckett Studies* 6. 2 (1997): 88.

[33] Michael Robinson, "From Purgatory to Inferno: Beckett and Dante Revisited," 70.

[34] Samuel Beckett, "Dante…Bruno. Vico…Joyce,"107.

[35] Christopher Ricks, *Beckett's Dying Words* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995) 27.

[36] Didier Anzieu, "Beckett and the Psychoanalyst," *Journal of Beckett Studies* 4.1 (1994): 32.

[37] Lois A. Cuddy, "Beckett's 'Dead Voices' in *Waiting for Godot*": New Inhabitants of Dante's *Inferno,*" *Modern Language Studies* 12. 2 (1982): 49.

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A SYNTHETIC MIND AT WORK: ERIUGENA'S REINTERPRETATION OF DIONYSIUS THE PSEUDO-AREOPAGITE IN THE 9TH CENTURY

timothy **budde**

John Scottus (†c.877), the famous controversialist, translator, and court philosopher to Charles the Bald, was pleased to distinguish himself as John 'Eriugena', John 'the Irishman'. Indeed, this surname separated him from his contemporaries not inasmuch as he was from Ireland—the French court and its surrounding monasteries had been peppered with Irishmen for decades. Rather, the name identified John as a scholar who could read Greek—Eriugena is a sort of greekism[1] which means of Irish stock, and, since he preferred the name Eriugena, that is what we shall call him. That Eriugena was Irish and read Greek is virtually all we know of the man personally[2].

Eriugena's early philosophical training followed the traditional Latin curriculum, e.g., the Latin Aristotle and the works of Augustine. And, even in his latest writings, Eriugena never wholly abandoned this foundation. However, his patron, the emperor Charles, encouraged Eriugena to pursue studies in the Greek fathers, especially Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, then presumed to be the patron and martyr of Paris[3]. With the support of Charles, Eriugena began translating the works of Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite (the *Celestial Hierarchy*, the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, the *Divine Names* and the *Mystical Theology* and the 10 epistles), whose writings had been sent to Louis the Pious in 827 by the Byzantine emperor, Michael the Stammerer[4]. Following, Eriugena began to translate several works by Maximus the Confessor[5], one of the first commentators on the Dionysian corpus. Thus, Eriugena had access to sources unknown to his contemporaries—Dionysius, the Christian conduit of late pagan neoplatonism and Maximus, a champion of Chalcedon who was influenced by Aristotle as much as by Christian neoplatonism. Therefore, when Eriugena came to compose his *magnum opus*, the *Periphyseon*, in the 860s he had at his disposal a veritable treasury of sources both from East and West, both Greek and Latin, Platonic and Aristotelian, pagan and Christian. However, the *Periphyseon*, Eriugena's synthesis of these gems, is more than simply eastern or western, Platonic or Aristotelian, Dionysian or Augustinian; it is entirely Eriugenian. For while Eriugena took pride in the breadth of his reading, his experiences in Greek studies served the depth of his understanding rather than his vanity, and the result of these studies was rather a presentation of his own, entirely new philosophy, than merely an interpretation of his predecessors. Or, to use terminology closer to his heart: for Eriugena, authority served truth (*uera ratio*), not vice versa.

Eriugena's introduction to Maximus' *Ambigua ad Iohannem* reveals a glimpse of Eriugena's synthetic approach. There, one discovers that Eriugena struggled with Dionysius' difficult Greek and obscure ideas, and that he used Maximus as a cypher to interpret what he considered problematic in Dionysius.

> Perhaps, says Eriugena, …I would not have lifted such dense clouds [from my understanding of

Dionysius] had I not found that the aforementioned most holy Maximus introduced and elucidated rather often in his own work the most obscure ideas of the most holy theologian Dionysius Areopagita, whose symbolism and theology I have recently translated at [Charles'] command, just as [he has] commanded the present work, and all this in such a way that I cannot doubt that divine clemency, which illumines all that is hidden by shadows, by its ineffable providence has enabled [Maximus] to reveal those things which were especially hidden to us in the works of this blessed Dionysius and before seemed to flee our understanding[6].

Eriugena continues his introduction, presenting a list of difficult 'Dionysian questions' to which he found elucidating answers in the original works of Maximus:

…how is the cause of all, which is God, one, simple and manifold; what is the procession, that is multiplication, of divine goodness which proceeds through all things from the highest beings to the lowest, first, through the general essences of all things, then through the most general genera, then the more general genera, then through the more specific species, up to the most specific species, descending through the differences and properties of things; again, what is reversion or congregation of this same divine goodness, which rises through all these same levels of being, from the infinite and various multiplicity of reality to the most simple unity of all things which is in God and is God…; in what sense is the aforementioned divine procession called ANALUTIKH (that is, resolution) and in what sense is reversion called QEWSIS (that is, deification); …what is cataphatic and what is apophatic theology, for which theories the teachings of the aforementioned blessed Dionysius Areopagita is most especially admired[7].

This inventory of questions reveals to us precisely what Eriugena considered valuable in the Dionysian corpus: procession and reversion, cataphasis and apophasis, multiplicity and unity, deification. However, it also contains elements which Eriugena could not have found in Dionysius. For example, the gradation of procession and reversion through genera, species, *differentiae* and properties rather comes from Maximus. Thus, while Eriugena presents this inventory as a list of particularly interesting Dionysian themes it is, in fact, a list of Eriugenian themes. The inclusion of Maximus in a list labeled 'Dionysian' suggests that Eriugena considered the gradation of all procession through these levels as authentically Dionysian. Indeed, authentically Dionysian referred to whatever Eriugena considered consistent with Dionysian philosophy, rather than what alone came from the plume of the Areopagite.

It is this combinatorial flare, less concerned for the composer than for the content, which is the driving force behind the *Periphyseon*. It is my intention to show this method at work in the context of Eriugena's treatment of apophasis or negative theology. Eriugena discovers this theme in Dionysius, and, interweaving it with Aristotle, Augustine and Maximus, extends apophasis to the whole of reality such that negation can be applied to all essences. He also considers the possibility that divine ignorance (*ignorantia dei*) may be understood

as a subjective genitive as well as an objective genitive—that God may, in some sense, be called ignorant as well as the object of our mystical ignorance. Finally, Eriugena identifies the nothing (*nihil*) which, through apophasis, may be predicated of God (*Deus nihil est*) with the nothing which is the principle or origin of creation (*ex nihilo*). The result of Eriugena's (re)interpretation of Dionysius is a theory of negation which is entirely peculiar to Eriugena, and a witness to his originality.

I. THE GLOBALIZATION OF NEGATIVE THEOLOGY AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATAPHASIS AND APOPHASIS
a) Augustine, ps.-Augustine and the Categoriae decem

Eriugena's *Periphyseon* is a dialogue between a teacher (*Nutritor*) and a student (*Alumnus*) who set for themselves the rather hefty goal of discussing, as the title of the work indicates (*Concerning Nature*), the nature of reality. The first premise of the *Periphyseon* is that all nature is divisible into 'that which is' and 'that which is not'[8]. It is a strange division, indeed, which includes 'that which is not' in the nature of reality, and Eriugena explains himself, noting that it may be understood in several different ways.

> The first [interpretation of the division of nature] seems to be that through which reason persuades us that everything which is subject to bodily sense or to the perception of intelligence is truly and reasonably said to be (*dici esse*), while that which, because of its excellence, seems to flee not only sense but all intellect and reason rightly seems not to be (*iure uideri non esse*); this excellence and the corresponding flight from human understanding is rightly understood… alone of God[9].

In sum, 'being' may be said of everything which is intelligible to man; whatever is unintelligible is said not to be. According to this division, then, God, who is unintelligible because he surpasses all intellect, may be said not to be.

Eriugena found inspiration for this negative theology in Dionysius. For Dionysius, apophasis, the negation of all names and attributes of God, follows cataphasis, the attribution of all names and attributes of God. Generally speaking, his works are arranged to conform to this movement: the *Divine Names*, an explanation of affirmative theology, precedes the *Mystical Theology*, a justification of his negative theology. Dionysius bases his famous system of affirmative and negative theology on the notions of causality and transcendence respectively.

> We must, he says, affirm every thesis of the Divinity inasmuch as it is the cause of all, but, more properly, we must negate each thesis of the Divinity inasmuch as it transcends all existents"[10].

Everything which comes from the Divinity as cause may be predicated of the Divinity, while the Divinity is none of those things which are caused by it.

In his *Periphyseon*, Eriugena often returns to this division between affirmative theology and negative theology, and shows that he understands well the difference.

> There is one kind of theology, he says—reversing the order found in Dionysius—which is called apophatic, and which denies that the divine essence or substance may be understood to be a being (*aliquid eorum quae sunt*); and there is another kind, called cataphatic, which predicates everything of the divine essence, and is therefore called affirmative theology; this kind of theology does not propose that the divine substance is a being (*aliquid eorum quae sunt*), rather, it argues that all beings may be predicated of the divine substance, for a cause may be signified through its effects[11].

Applying the negative theology found in Dionysius to the division of nature into 'that which is' and 'that which is not', Eriugena introduces an Aristotelo-Augustinian[12] interpretation. Indeed, according to Eriugena, everything which is intelligible belongs to one of the ten Aristotelian categories. Therefore, whatever is unintelligible must be extra-categorical, just as it is supersubstantial.

> The signifying power of the categories, says Eriugena, extends to everything which is created by God, but their power falls short regarding that nature which is neither able to be spoken nor understood[13].

Eriugena's reinterpretation of his division of nature through the Aristotelian categories leads to a corresponding reinterpretation of negative theology through these same categories. "For as Augustine says[14], when it comes to theology, the signifying power of the categories is extinguished"[15]. Therefore, the Divinity is said not to be, not only because it is unintelligible, but also because it does not fit into any of the ten Aristotelian categories. The Eriugenian expression of negative theology, although not yet substantially different from that of Dionysius, certainly could not have been foreseen by the Areopagite, who did not incorporate the Aristotelian categories into his negative theology.

b. Maximus and Gregory Nazianzen

With regard to theology, that is, concerning God, Eriugena's parallel between being/non-being, intelligible/unintelligible and categorical/non-categorical is perfect: God is not inasmuch as unintelligible and supercategorical. However, with regard to philosophy, that is, concerning being, the parallel breaks down. In effect, while God is not, unintelligible, supercategorical, not all that is unintelligible is God, nor is all that is unintelligible supercategorical. For, according to Eriugena, all created essences are unintelligible.

> The first interpretation [of the division of nature into being and non-being] argues that everything which is subject to sensation or intellection is said to be, while what flees the senses and the intellect, because of its excellence, is rightly said not to be. This excellence is rightly understood of

God alone *and of all essences created by Him*[16].

Thus, Eriugena applies the Dionysian negative theology to essence or *ousia*, the first of Aristotle's categories, as well as to God Himself. Not only is God entirely unknowable to man, but so is the essence of every created being.

Eriugena's extension of incomprehensibility to *ousia* comes neither from Augustine, nor from the ps.-Augustinian *Categoriae decem*, but rather from Maximus and (so says Eriugena[17]) Gregory Nazianzen.

> If you look closely at the teachings of Gregory the theologian and his interpreter, Maximus, you will find that the being (*ousia*) of everything which is is *per se* incomprehensible not only to the senses, but even to the intellect…[18]

Thus, while the disjunctions being/non-being, intelligible/unintelligible and categorical/supercategorical parallel one another with regard to the Divinity, which is supercategorical, unintelligible and supersubstantial, this same parallel does not hold true with regard to being or *ousia*, which is, on the one hand, categorical, but, on the other, unintelligible[19]. As it turns out negative theology, for Eriugena, is not limited to God, but extended to all essences.

For this reason, Eriugena uses the very same terminology to describe the incomprehensibility of God and the incomprehensibility of essences.

> Noone is able to define being in itself or say what it is (*quid sit*). However, from those things which inseparably adhere to it, and without which [*ousia*] is not able to be, place, that is, and time…it may be defined only with regard to the fact that it is (*quia est*). Thus, being cannot in any way be defined with regard to what it is (*quid est*), but it is defined in terms of the fact that it is (*quia est*). For, as we said, the fact that it is (*quia est*), not what it is (*quid sit*), is made known (*datur*) from place and time and the other accidents, which are understood to be either within it or outside of it. And this may be said of every being universally, the most general, the most specific, and whatever is in between. For even the cause of all, which is God, is known to exist by the things which are made by him, but only with regard to the fact that he is (*quia est*); by no signification which comes from creatures is he able to be known with regard to what he is (*quid sit*)[20].

In short, neither God nor created essences are known *quid est*, but only *quia est*. This distinction between *quid est* and *quia est* is not at all Dionysian; Eriugena has taken it from Maximus[21], and uses it often. However, Eriugena is not merely copying from Maximus here, but interweaving the Dionysian commentator with the ps.-Augustinian categories, for being (*ousia*), the first category, is known through its accidents, that is, the

other nine categories. Thus, just as God is known through his created effects or theophanies, so all essences are known by their accidents. In this sense, one may consider accidents to be *ousiophanies*, as it were, 'manifestations of being', with regard to created essences.

Ultimately, what is a negative theology for Dionysius amounts to a negative philosophy for Eriugena, where apophasis is not so much a function of the singular transcendence of the One above being (as it is for Dionysius), or above the categorical (as it seems from Eriugena's interpretation of ps.-Augustine), but of the transcendence of each order of reality over that which precedes it: God over being and being over accidents.

> For, says Eriugena, the affirmation of the inferior is the negation of the superior; and again, the negation
> of the inferior is the affirmation of the superior; and in the same way, the affirmation of the superior is the
> negation of the inferior, while the negation of the superior will be the affirmation of the inferior[22].

Affirmation and negation is not determined by an invisible line which separates God from creatures, but is determined, rather, by a series of divisions which separate each metaphysical reality from those which are above and those which are below[23].

In this, we recognize the influence of Maximus in Eriugena's interpretation of Dionysius. For this mutual reciprocity of apophasis and cataphasis is clearly stated in the prologue to Maximus's *Mystagogia*:

> [I]f we wish to know the difference between God and creature, it is necessary to recognize that the
> affirmation of what is above is the negation of beings, and that the affirmation of beings is the negation
> of what is above[24].

c. Conclusion (Eriugena)

Eriugena's synthesis began with Dionysius' two branches of theology: apophatic and cataphatic. Apophasis was then considered from the perspective of the ten categories of Aristotle, interpreted through Augustine and the ps.-Augustinian *Categoriae decem*. The result was an interpretation of negation which opposed what is contained in the categories to what is outside of every category as being is opposed to non-being. A difficult amalgamation of Dionysius, Augustine, and Aristotle, this interpretation does not substantially change Dionysius' meaning; it rather proposes another perspective from which it may be viewed. However, when Eriugena adds, following Maximus, that *ousia*, the first category, is also unknowable, the parallel between intelligible/unintelligible, and categorical/noncategorical is disrupted, and the categories themselves are split into knowable (accidents) and unknowable but known through its accidents (being or ousia)in the same way that God is unknowable in his essence but known through his theophanies. This attempt to harmonize created and uncreated reality (imposing the metaphysical structure of the uncreated onto the created universe) leads

to an expansion, or globalization, as it were, of the notion of apophasis, beyond what Dionysius intended, interpreted by Eriugena through Maximus, and combined with ps.-Augustine. The result is that Dionysius' negative theology, based firmly on the transcendence of the One above all created reality becomes what one Eriugenian scholar[25] calls a 'meontology', a metaphysics of non-being which encompasses not just God, but the whole of created reality.

II. The Subjectivization of Divine Ignorance: a Subjective vs. an Objective Genitive

As regarding the distinction between apophasis and cataphasis, Eriugena follows Dionysius rather closely concerning the superiority of negative theology over affirmative theology. As we have already seen, intelligibility is limited to the categories[26]. But God is neither a category, nor contained in any category. Thus, he is unknowable.

> True reason, says Eriugena, is absolutely zealous in this, and argues and, by sure investigations into the truth, confirms that nothing is able to be said of God properly, since he surpasses every intellect and all sensible and intelligible significations, "who is better known through unknowing" (*nesciendo*), [and] "the ignorance of whom is true wisdom", who is more truly and faithfully denied in all things rather than affirmed[27].

Clearly, then, apophasis and cataphasis are not of equal value. For the former is the better way (*melius*) as Augustine says, and is true wisdom (*uera sapientia*) according to Dionysius.

> For, Eriugena says, whatever one denies of Him, one truly denies; however, it is not the case that everything which one affirms is truly affirmed, since if one affirms that he is this or that, one is convicted of falsity since [God] is nothing (*nihil*) of those things which are or are able to be spoken or understood[28].

Eriugena is clearly following Dionysius here, and, indeed, indicates this by quoting the Areopagite at length:

> If one affirms: '[God] is neither this nor that nor anything', he would be seen to speak the truth, because [God] is nothing (*nihil*) of those things which are and which are not, whom no one can approach unless first, 'with a strong movement of the mind, one rejects all sensation and [all] intellectual operations, and everything which is sensible and everything which is and which is not, and, in this state of unknowing (*inscius*), as much as possible, one be restored to the unity of him who is above every essence and every understanding'[29] [30].

The divine ignorance, the height of Dionysian mysticism is here identified with the simple conclusion that God

is not one of the categories. For Eriugena, Dionysius' rejection of all sensation and intellection is tantamount to the recognition that God is neither this nor that (*nec hoc nec illud nec illum ille est*). While Eriugena's is a rather bold simplification of Dionysius's theory, it is not in direct contradiction with it.

However, Eriugena begins to pass beyond the intention of Dionysius when he interprets Dionysius's *ignorantia dei* as a subjective genitive. The *Alumnus* says, "[I]t disturbs me greatly how God may be called ignorant, to whom nothing of himself or of those things which are made by him remains hidden"[31]. The *Nutritor* assures the *Alumnus* that there is truly no ignorance in God.

> Be mindful, he says, and regard carefully those things which were said, for if you consider the power of words and things with the pure gaze of the mind you will discover most clearly, and with no obscurity in the way, that there is no ignorance in God[32].

In what follows, the master seems to contradict himself, explaining precisely in what sense *ignorantia dei* may be understood as a subjective genitive.

> …[D]id it seem to you that, when I argued that God does not know what he himself is (*quid sit*), I affirmed anything other than that he understands himself to be none of those things which are (*in nullo eorum quae sunt*)? For how could he recognize in himself that which cannot be in him? This same ignorance is the highest and true wisdom (*summa ac uera sapientia*). Such is what I mean, just as if one of us were to say of himself: I do not understand myself to be a stone, senseless and entirely free from all vital motion[33].

Just as Eriugena extended the notion of negative theology to include all created essences, here he extends the notion of *ignorantia dei* to include the subjective genitive as well as the objective genitive. In this way, even God's self-knowledge can be characterized as a kind of ignorance. Eriugena outlines several senses of divine ignorance, one of which compares the subjective and objective genitives: God's ignorance of himself (subjective genitive) is the same as our ignorance of him (objective genitive).

> To the aforementioned [senses of divine ignorance], he says, [another] is added, which the order of our dialogue demands we now treat, [and] by which God is said not to know himself (*ignorare*) to be amongst the things which were made by him[34], which things are included in the ten categories by the philosophers[35].

The development over Dionysius, who never discusses the possibility of *ignorantia dei* as a subjective genitive, is already striking. However, when Eriugena concludes this section on divine ignorance, he claims that his is, in fact, an interpretation of Dionysius and Augustine.

For, what the holy fathers Augustine and Dionysius most truly said of God—that is, Augustine said: '[he] who is better known by unknowing (*nesciendo*)', and Dionysius said: '[he] of whom ignorance is true wisdom'—I believe they understood these things not only of those who piously seek Him, but even of [God] Himself[36].

Thus, just as Eriugena extends the power of apophasis to include created essences, so he expands the meaning of divine ignorance, *ignorantia dei*, such that this ignorance may have God as its subject (subjective genitive: God's ignorance of himself) or as its object (objective genitive: man's ignorance of God). Likewise, this extension results in a theory which is, although built upon foundations laid by his predecessors, entirely original to Eriugena.

III. ONTOLIGIZATION: EX NIHILO AND NON-BEING

To summarize before continuing, Eriugena extends the Dionysian negative theology so as to consider apophasis appropriate to both God and all created essences, and expands the notion of divine ignorance so as to refer both to creatures (objective genitive) and to God himself (subjective genitive). There is one final expansion of the Dionysian negataive theology which I would like to consider.

Eriugena follows Dionysius closely in his application of negative theology. According to Dionysius, God may be called both being and non being.[37] But, because negation surpasses affirmation, the latter name is more appropriate. Thus, all the names which Dionysius affirms of the divine essence at the beginning of the *Divine Names*, he then denies in the last chapter of the *Mystical Theology*[38]. God, then, is more non-being, or nothing, than being, and Eriugena agrees with Dionysius on this point.

Explain, I beg you, says the *Alumnus*, what sacred theology means by this name, 'nothing' (*nihilum*). I believe, responds the *Nutritor*, that the inexpressible, incomprehensible and inaccessible brilliance of the divine goodness, which is unknown to all intellects, human and angelic alike—for it is superessential and supernatural—, and which, understood in itself, neither is, nor was, nor will be, is signified by this name. For it is understood in no existent, because it surpasses all things[39].

Moreover, the name 'nothing' fits perfectly into Eriugena's division of nature: God, who is incomprehensible, outside of every category, and therefore not a *quid* or *aliquid*, is nothing. However, God, as nothing, reveals himself in his theophanies.

While [the clarity of divine goodness] is made visible to the gazes of the mind through a kind of ineffable descent into beings (*in ea quae sunt*), it alone is found to be in all beings, and both is and was and will be. Therefore, to the degree that the incomprehensible is understood, it is, because of its excellence, rightly called nothing (*nihilum*). But, when [the divine clarity] appears in its theophanies, it is said to

proceed from nothing into something (*ex nihilo in aliquid*); and whatever is properly thought to be above all, is also properly understood in every essence. Therefore, every visible and invisible creature may be called a theophany, that is, a divine apparition[40].

In this one passage, Eriugena has combined almost every significant neoplatonic idea he finds in Dionysius: God as non-being, negative theology, theophanies, procession. However, he associates this divine self-manifestation with creation in a manner unforeseen by Dionysius. For Eriugena, the *ex nihilo* which forms the principle of God's self-manifestation is the same as the *ex nihilo* from which God is said to create all things.

And from himself [God] makes himself; for he is lacking in no other material, which could be different from himself, in which he makes himself. Otherwise, he would seem powerless and imperfect in himself were he to receive from elswhere an aid for his manifestation and perfection. From himself, therefore, God takes the principles of his theophanies, that is, his divine apparitions, since from him and through him and in him and toward him are all things. And for this reason the very material from which we read that the world was made is from him and in him, and he himself is in it inasmuch as it is understood to be[41].

God is the first principle of creation not only as its cause, but also as its material element, for he is the *nihil* from which (*ex nihilo*) all things were made.

Eriugena makes the connection between *nihil* as a divine name and *nihil* as the beginning of creation even stronger in a work which comes from the same period, his *Expositiones in Hierarchiam caelestem*, where he addresses the same issue:

For, he says, we believe [God] to have made all things from nothing, but perhaps he is that nothing (*nihil*), he who is called nothing (*nihil*) because of his excellence, since he is extolled as superessential above all things and is glorified above all things which are spoken or understood, and since he is in no way counted amongst those things which are. For, if he is at the same time all things (*omnia quae sunt*) and nothing (*quae non sunt*), who would say that he is something (*aliquid*) or not something, since he is the existence of all things and more than the existence of all things? Or, if he is not something (*aliquid non est*), then he is nothing (*nihil*) through his infinity[42].

IIII. Conclusion

To conclude with a brief summary: Eriugena takes the theory of apophasis, which he finds in Dionysius, and reinterprets it through the categories of Aristotle, following the advice of Augustine, that the power of the categories is extinguished in the presence of theology. Then, Eriugena includes Maximus' teaching regarding the unintelligibility of created essences. This introduction of Maximus allows Eriugena to extend Dionysian

negative theology beyond God to all created essences. This same spirit of globalization allows Eriugena to consider the possibility that *ignorantia dei* may be considered a subjective genitive as well as an objective genitive. For God's ignorance of himself is the same as our ignorance of him—he knows that he is not (*ignorare*) a being. Finally, inasmuch as non-being is the same as nothing, Eriugena finds himself justified in identifying the *ex nihilo* of God's self-manifestation with the *ex nihilo* of creation.

The result of Eriugena's interpretation of Dionysius is a theory of apophasis which interweaves theology, ontology and creation, the likes of which could not have been anticipated by his predecessors, nor understood by his immediate successors. While the elements from which Eriugena constructs this new system can be identified as Dionysian or Maximian, Aristotelian or Augustinian, the philosophy is original to Eriugena himself. Or, to follow Brian Stock's correction of Gilson's famous critique of Eriugena: Eriugena "read both Greek and Latin but thought for himself[43]". In this sense, the *Periphyseon* is a shining example of a highly original type of comparative studies in the Middle Ages; one which followed the intuitive spirit of man under the direction of *uera ratio*, rather than that of bald authority.

notes

[1] In fact, the name seems to be a mixture of old Irish (*Eriu*) and greek (*gena*) for the latin West had commonly used the name Scottus to refer to Irishmen. For the history of Eriugena's title, both medieval and modern, *cf.* Cappuyns, M. *Jean Scot Érigène, sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée.* Paris: Declée, 1933, 8*ff.*: "*Eriu*, forme vieil-irlandaise du primitif *Eriujo* (?), encore usité poétiquement de nos jour avec la désinance dative *Erin*, a donné moyennant quelques transformations *Ire-land*. Le latin *Hibernia*, comme son equivalent grec jIouerniva ou jIevrnh (de jIüevrnh), a la même origine".

[2] His exact date of birth and death, the time of his arrival in the court of Charles the Bald, where he may have been educated all remain a mystery.

[3] The real Areopagite was the convert of St. Paul mentioned in the book of Acts (17.34). However, since 1895 scholars have considered the author of the works that were translated by Eriugena to have been the work of a 5th- or 6th-century follower of the pagan Proclus (d.485); *cf.* Stiglmayr, J. "Der Neuplatoniker Proklos als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Uebel." *Historiches Jarbuch* 16 (1895): 253-273; 721-748; Koch, H. "Proklus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen." *Philologus* 54 (1895): 438-454; Although the author of the works which have come to us under the name Dionysius the Areopagite clearly know and used the works of this pagan Neoplatonist, there is still no consensus as to whether he was a Christian influenced by the philosophy of the day, or a pagan hiding behind a Christian name at a time when pagan philosophy was being persecuted.

[4] *Cf.* Omont, H. "Manuscrit des oeuvres de S. Denys l'Aréopagite envoyé de Constantinople à Louis le Débonnaire en 827." *Revue des études greques* XVII (1904): 230-236.

[5] The *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* and the *Ambigua ad Iohannem* and *Ambigua ad Thomam.*

[6] Fortassis autem qualicunque apologia defensus non tam densas subierim caligines, nisi uiderem preafatum beatissimum Maximum saepissime in processu sui operis obscurissimas sanctissimi theologi Dionysii Areopagitae sententias, cuius symbolicos theologicosque nuper, Vobis similiter iubentibus, transtuli, introduxisse mirabilique modo delucidasse intantum ut nullo modo dubitarim diuinam clementiam, quae illuminat abscondita tenebrarum, sua ineffabili prouidentia hoc disposuisse ut ea quidem nobis quae maxime obstrusa in praedictis beati Dionysii libris ac uix peruia sensusque nostros fugere uidebantur aperiret, sapientissimo praefato Maximo lucidissime explanante, *Prooem*., *Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca* XVIII, 3, 15-25.

[7] Exempli gratia, ut pauca de pluribus dicam, quomodo causa omnium, quae Deus est, una sit simplex et multiplex; qualis sit processio, id est multiplicatio, diuinae bonitatis per omnia quae sunt, a summo usque deorsum, per generalem omnium essentiam primo, deinceps per genera generalissima, deinde per genera generaliora, inde per species specialiores usque ad species specielissimas per differentias proprietatesque descendens; et iterum eiusdem diuinae uidelicet bonitatis qualis sit reuersio, id est congregatio, per eosdem gradus ab infinita eorum quae sunt uariaque multiplicatione usque ad simplicissimam omnium unitatem, quae in Deo est et Deus est, ita ut et Deus omnia sit et omnia Deus sint. Et quomodo praedicta quidem diuina in omnia processio ANALUTIKH dicitur, hoc est resolutio, reuersio uero QEWSIS, hoc est deificatio. Et qua ratione quae sunt maxima multiplicatione, minima sint uirtute; quae uero minima multiplicatione, maxima uirtute. Quid KATAFATIKHN et APOFATIKHN dicam QEOLOGIAN, in quibus maxime praedicti beati Dionysii Areopagitae profundissima diuinissimaque admiranda est disputatio! *Prooem*., 25-42.

[8] Nᴠᴛʀɪᴛᴜʀ. Saepe mihi cogitanti diligentiusque quantum uires suppetunt inquirenti rerum omnium quae uel animo percipi possunt uel intentionem eius superant *primam summamque diuisionem esse in ea quae sunt et in ea quae non sunt* horum omnium generale uocabulum occurrit quod graece FUSIS, latine uero natura uocitatur, *Periphyseon* I, 1-6; all references to the *Periphyseon* refer to the *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis*, volumes 161-165, ed. É. Jeauneau.

[9] Quorum primus uidetur esse ipse per quem ratio suadet omnia quae corporeo sensui uel intelligentiae perceptioni succumbunt uere ac rationabiliter dici esse, ea uero quae per excellentiam suae naturae non solum sensum sed etiam omnem intellectum rationemque fugiunt iure uideri non esse, quae non nisi solo deo… recte intelliguntur, *Periphyseon* I, 53-59.

[10] In ipsa (*i.e.*, Divinitas) etiam oportet omnes existentium ponere et affirmare positiones, ueluti omnium *causa*, et omnes eas potentius negare, tanquam super omnia *superexistente*... *Mystica Theologia* I, 2, *Patrologia Latina* CXXII, 1173B.

[11] Vna quidem, id est APOFATIKH, diuinam essentiam seu substantiam esse aliquid eorum quae sunt, id est quae dici aut intelligi possunt, negat; altera uero, KATAFATIKH,omnia quae sunt de ea predicat, et ideo affirmatiua dicitur, non ut confirmet aliquid esse eorum quae sunt, sed omnia quae ab ea sunt de ea posse praedicari suadet. Rationabiliter enim per causatiua causalis potest significari, *Periphyseon* I, 682-688.

[12] "In the ninth and tenth centuries, it was from the [ps.-Augustinian] *Categoriae Decem* from which scholars gained their knowledge of [Aristotle's] *Categories*…", *cf*. Marenbon, J. *From the Circle of Alcuin to the School*

of Chartres, logic, theology and philosophy in the Early Middle Ages. Cambridge: University Press, 1981, 16*ff.*

[13] Nam in ipsis naturis a deo conditis motibusque earum kategoriae qualiscunque sit potentia praeualet, in ea uero natura quae nec dici nec intelligi potest per omnia in omnibus deficit, *Periphyseon* I, 905-909.

[14] *Cf. De trin.* V, i, 2; V, viii, 9.

[15] …ut ait sanctus pater Augustinus in libris de trinitate, dum ad theologiam (hoc est ad diuinae essentiae inuestigationem) peruenitur, kategoriarum uirtus omnino extinguitur, *Periphyseon* I, 903-905.

[16] Quorum primus uidetur esse ipse per quem ratio suadet omnia quae corporeo sensui uel intelligentiae perceptioni succumbunt uere ac rationabiliter dici esse, ea uero quae per excellentiam suae naturae non solum sensum sed etiam omnem intellectum rationemque fugiunt iure uideri non esse, *quae non nisi in solo deo et in omnium rerum quae ab eo condita sunt rationibus atque essentiis recte intelliguntur*, *Periphyseon* I, 53-64.

[17] Without exception, all of Eriugena's references to this Gregory parallel the *Ambigua* of Maximus; one would reasonably assume that Eriugena had no direct knowledge of Gregory. *Cf.* Cappuyns, *op.cit.*, 278: "Érigène semble n'avoir connu l'évêque de Nazianze qu'à travers les citations et commentaires de Maxime".

[18] Si autem acutius uestigia sancti Gregorii theologi expositorisque sui Maximi sapientissimi sequens inspexeris, inuenies OUSIAN omnino in omnibus quae sunt per se ipsam incomprehensibilem non solum sensui sed etiam intellectui esse…, *Periphyseon* I, 1245-1249; *cf. Ambigua ad Iohannem* XXX, 4-17.

[19] Eriugena does not address the issue raised regarding *ousia* and the disjunction 'being/non-being'. One may rightly ask whether *ousia* (being) may be called non-being inasmuch as it is unintelligible. The parallel between God and his theophanies and *ousia* and its accidents would seem to permit this conclusion with certain qualifications.

[20] OUCIAN per se ipsam diffinire et dicere quid sit nemo potest. Ex his autem quae inseparabiliter ei adhaerent et sine quibus esse non potest, ex loco dico et tempore… solummodo diffiniri potest quia est. OUCIA itaque nullo modo diffinitur quid est, sed diffinitur quia est. Ex loco nanque, ut diximus, et tempore accidentibusque aliis, quae siue in ipsa seu extra intelliguntur esse, tantummodo datur non quid sit sed quia est. Et hoc generaliter de omni OUCIA, siue generalissima, siue specialissima, siue media non incongrue quis dixerit. Nam et causa omnium, quae deus est, ex his quae ab ea condita sunt solummodo cognoscitur esse, nullo uero creaturarum argumento possumus intelligere quid sit, *Periphyseon* I, 1911-1924.

[21] *Cf. Ambigua ad Iohannem* XI, 18-20: …cognouit Deum, non secundum aliquid essentiam esse et substantiam (hoc enim impossibile et incomprehensibile), sed per hoc solummodo esse discens; *cf.* also VI, 538-540 and XIII, 137-148.

[22] Inferioris enim affirmatio superioris est negatio. Itemque inferioris negatio superioris est affirmatio. Eodemque modo superioris affirmatio inferioris est negatio, negatio uero superioris erit affirmatio inferioris, *Periphyseon* I,94-97.

[23] Affirmatio enim hominis negatio est angeli, negatio uero hominis affirmatio est angeli et uicissim. Eademque regula in omnibus caelestibus essentiis usque dum ad supremum omnium perueniatur ordinem obseruari

potest, *Periphyseon* I, 97-100.

[24] Dei` ga;r, ei[per wJ~ ajlhqw`~ to; gnw`nai diafora;n qeou` kai; ktismavtwn esti;n ajvnagkai`on hJmi`n qevsin ei\nai tou` uJperovnto~ th;n tw`n o[ntwn ajfaivresin: kai; th;n tw`n o[ntwn qevsin, ei\nai tou` uJperovnto~ ajfaivresin, *Patrologia Graeca* LXXXXI, 664B.

[25] *Cf.* Moran, Dermot. *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena. A study of Idealism in the Middle Ages.* Cambridge: University Press, 1989.

[26] Which, we have already seen, does not necessarily imply that all of the categories are intelligible.

[27] Ratio uera in hoc uniuersaliter studet ut suadeat certisque ueritatis inuestigationibus approbet nil de deo proprie posse dici, quoniam superat omnem intellectum omnesque sensibiles intelligibilesque significationes, "qui melius nesciendo scitur (Augustine, *De ordine* II, xvi, 44)", "cuius ignorantia uera est sapientia (Dionysius, *Ep*. I, 1065A13-B2)", qui uerius fideliusque negatur in omnibus quam firmatur, *Periphyseon* I, 2932-2938.

[28] Quodcunque enim de ipso negaueris uere negabis, non autem omne quodcunque firmaueris uere firmabis. Siquidem si approbaueris hoc uel hoc illum esse falsitatis redargueris, quia omnium, quae sunt, quae dici uel intelligi possunt, nihil est, *Periphyseon* I, 2938-2941.

[29] *Mystica Theologia* I, i, *Patrologia Graeca* IV, 997B.

[30] Si uero pronuntiaueris: 'Nec hoc nec illud nec ullum ille est', uerax esse uideberis, quia nihil horum quae sunt et quae non sunt est, ad quem nemo potest accedere nisi prius "corroborato mentis itinere sensus omnes deserat et intellectuales operationes et sensibilia et omne quod est et quod non est et ad unitatem, ut possible est, inscius restituatur ipsius qui est super omnem essentiam et intelligentiam", *Periphyseon* I, 2941-2948.

[31] Sed ualde me mouet qua ratione ignorantia in deum cadat, quem nihil latet aut in se ipso aut in his quae a se sunt, *Periphyseon* II, 2202-2204.

[32] N. Esto itaque intentus, et ea quae dicta sunt diligenter inspice. Si enim puro mentis contuitu uirtutem rerum atque uerborum consideraueris, apertissime reperies nulla obstante caligine nullam in deum ignorantiam cadere, *Periphyseon* II, 2205-2208.

[33] Num tibi uidemur aliud suadere dum dicimus deum se ipsum quid sit ignorare, quam in nullo eorum quae sunt se esse intelligere? Quomodo enim in se ipso potest cognoscere quod non potest in se ipso esse? Ipsa itaque ignorantia summa ac uera est sapientia. Tale autem est quod dicimus, ueluti si quis nostrum de se ipso dicat: 'Lapidem me esse insensatum omni uitali motu carentem omnino non intelligo', hoc est, me lapidem insensatum uitali motu carentem omnino me non esse intelligo, *Periphyseon* II, 2210-2218.

[34] The verb is negative, but the sense is positive: God knows that he is not amongst the things which where created by him.

[35] His praedictis quarta species additur, de qua nunc tractare ordo disputationis poscebat, qua deus dicitur ignorare se esse in numero rerum quae ab eo facta sunt, quas intra denariam quantitatem praedicamentorum philosophi conantur concludere, *Periphyseon* II, 2324-2327.

[36] Nam quod sancti patres, Augustinum dico et Dionysium, de deo uerissime pronuntiant—Augustinus quidem: "Qui melius", inquit, "nesciendo scitur", Dionysius autem: "Cuius ignorantia uera est sapientia"—non solum de intellectibus qui eum pie studioseque quaerunt, uerum etiam de se ipso intelligendum opinor, *Periphyseon* II,

2369-2374

[37] Et ipsum uero esse ex anteonte, et ab ipso est esse, et non ipse esse... DN V, 8, *Patrologia Latina* CXXII, 1150A.

[38] *Cf.* Jeauneau, É. "Néant divin et théophanie. Érigène, disciple de Denys." *Premier Congrès International Denys l'Aréopagite (Athènes, 29 juin-2 juillet 1993), Actes*, Athens, 1995: 121-127.

[39] A. …Quid autem eo nomine, quod est nihilum, sancta significat theologia, explanari a te peto. N. Ineffabilem et incomprehensibilem diuinae bonitatis inaccessibilemque claritatem omnibus intellectibus siue humanis siue angelicis incognitam—superessentialis est enim et supernaturalis—eo nomine significatam crediderim, quae, dum per se ipsam cogitatur, neque est, neque erat, neque erit. In nullo enim intelligitur existentium, quia superat omnia, *Periphyseon* III, 2538-2546.

[40] Dum uero per condescensionem quandam ineffabilem in ea quae sunt mentis obtutibus inspicitur, ipsa sola inuenitur in omnibus esse, et est, et erat, et erit. Dum ergo incomprehensibilis intelligitur, per excellentiam nihilum non immerito uocitatur. At uero in suis theophaniis incipiens apparere, ueluti ex nihilo in aliquid dicitur procedere; et quae proprie super omnem essentiam existimatur, proprie quoque in omni essentia cognoscitur. Ideoque omnis uisibilis et inuisibilis creatura theophania (id est diuina apparitio) potest appellari, *Periphyseon* III, 2546-2555.

[41] Et de se ipsa se ipsam facit; non enim indiget alterius materiae, quae ipsa non sit, in qua se ipsam facit. Alioqui impotens uideretur et in se ipso imperfectus, si aliunde acciperet apparitionis et perfectionis suae auxilium. A se igitur ipso deus accipit theophaniarum suarum (hoc est diuinarum apparitionum) occasiones, quoniam ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso et ad ipsum sunt omnia. Ac per hoc, et ipsa materies, de qua legitur mundum fecisse, ab ipso et in ipso est; et ipse in ea est, quantum intelligitur ea esse, *Periphyseon* III, 2461-2469.

[42] Credimus enim ipsum de nihilo omnia fecisse; nisi forte illud nihil ipse est qui, quoniam super omnia superessentialis extollitur et super omne quod dicitur et intelligitur glorificatur, non irrationabiliter per excellentiam nihil esse dicitur, quoniam in numero omnium quae sunt nullo modo collocatur. Si enim ipse est simul omnia quae sunt et quae non sunt, quis dixerit aliquid eum esse uel non esse, dum omnium sit esse et plus quam esse? Aut, si aliquid non est per excellentiam, non priuationem, conficitur nihil esse per infinitatem, *Expositiones*, IV, 73-82, *Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Medievalis* 31, p. 67.

[43] *Cf.* Stock, B. "Observations on the Use of Augustine by Johannes Scottus Eriugena." *Harvard Theological Review*, lxxix, 1, 1967: 220.

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