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ON HAMLET'S CRYPT: EFFI BRIEST, ASTA NIELSEN, AND BRITNEY SPEARS

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This contribution looks at the way instinct is transmitted and represented as ghost appearance. The essay elaborates two basic theses: first, that instinct is not defined by creaturely heritage, since it is not a testable structure in itself, nor subject to mourning and developmental processes; and second, that works of fine literature and pop oeuvres alike may serve as carriers of a ghost transmission charged with instinctive heritage. The study represents a model for reading ghostly genealogies that complement the familiar and familial reproductive ones as it draws on traditions such as the adultery novel, continental philosophy, psychoanalysis, and Disney.

Currently based in Berlin, Viola Kolarov has taught in the German Departments of the Johns Hopkins University and New York University. She has published on Shakespeare, contemporary art, film, and pop culture. Her forthcoming book, "Shakespeare and the Autobiography of the Machine Age," rethinks Goethe, the German translation/transmission of Shakespeare, and the German literary tradition in the contexts of media technology.

Originally from Berlin, Susanne Lanckowsky entered the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, class of Franz Ackermann, in 2007. Since 2009 she has shown solo and in group on numerous occasions and studied abroad with prestigious scholarship support for one semester at the Faculdade de Belas Artes Universidade do Porto, Portugal, and for another semester at the Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado La Esmeralda in Mexico.

Cet article examine la façon dont on représente l'instinct comme un fantôme et comment on le transmit de cette manière. Il entre dans les détails de deux thèses fondamentales. La première dit qu'on ne définit pas l'instinct à travers l'héritage humain puisque l'instinct n'est pas une structure évaluable et, en plus, il ne se soumet ni au processus du deuil ni à celui du développement. La deuxième dit que les œuvres littéraires classiques, ainsi que celles populaires peuvent servir à transmettre un fantôme chargé de l'héritage instinctif. Cet étude représente un modèle de lecture des généalogies fantômes qui combine les familières reproductives avec les familiales reproductives puisqu'il fait appel aux traditions telles que le roman de l'adultère, de la philosophie continentale, de la psychanalyse et de Disney.

Viola Kolarov, enseigne l'allemand à l'Université Johns Hopkins, ainsi qu'à l'Université de New York avant de s'installer à Berlin. Elle publie des textes sur Shakespeare, sur l'art contemporain, sur le cinéma et sur la culture populaire. Son prochain livre, intitulé *Shakespeare and the Autobiography of the Machine Age*, propose des nouvelles réflexions sur Goethe, sur la traduction/transmission de Shakespeare en allemand, ainsi que sur la tradition littéraire allemande, dans le contexte de *media technology*.

Originaire de Berlin, Susanne Lanckowsky s'inscrit à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe sous la direction de Franz Ackermann en 2007. Après 2009, elle participe à de nombreuses expositions individuelles et collectives. Elle étudie à l'étranger pendant un semestre à *Faculdade de Belas Artes Universidade do Porto* au Portugal, ainsi que à la *Escuela Nacional de Pintura, Escultura y Grabado La Esmeralda* au Mexique grâce à des bourses prestigieuses.

"I'm plagued by fear at my duplicity.
I don't have the right feelings."
Theodor Fontane, *Effi Briest* (1895)

"I am a plaything.
That I have feelings has been forgotten."
Asta Nielsen as Hamlet (1920)

"I know I may be young,
but I've got feelings too."
Britney Spears, "I'm a Slave 4 U" (2001)

In crypt transmissions, the borders between recipients, otherwise scrupulously maintained by Oedipal identities, signatures, biographies, narratives, and languages of pure and perfect translatability, disappear, not because they are destroyed or in any way tampered with, but because the distance between receivers is so great that the crypt can replicate itself perfectly without endangering the Oedipal edifices. The *philosopheme crypt* was revalorized by Laurence Rickels in the course of his engagement with psychoanalytic writings on aberrant conditions of mourning.[1] Most generally, the crypt holds stowaway loss in the pre-Oedipal phases or layers of libidinal organization, which remains preserved intact because the crypt is unrecognized and unmourned, and capable of instant replication upon contact with host Oedipal structures. The neotenous state[2]—both premature sexuality and retention of early features in the mature form—of the crypt's inhabitant makes it the perfect candidate for development in the novel, film, and pop culture.

Our ability to identify with the crypt's inhabitant, heir to our most intense pre-Oedipal pleasures and traumas, may go back to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the play about the prince who failed in the succession of Oedipal power structures, while retaining his childhood features in adult shape. J. W. Goethe first noted and developed this highlight of the play in his educational fantasy novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meisters Apprenticeship*). The Hamlet image Goethe conjures is of a flower's violent metamorphosis into a tree whose branches and roots shatter the fragile vessel that nourished it. The allegory reflects what psychoanalysis discovered at the core of our deepest longings that, although shattered by later stages of development, remains and retains the libidinal and instinctual draw of our individual destinies. As a method and practice of media transmission, psychoanalysis was founded as the receiver of Goethe's discovery[3] and provided a new forum for writing on and from crypts that remained compatible with modern discourses that shunned fiction.[4] Another historical line of crypt succession goes from the presumed adulteress Mary, Queen of Scotts, who embodies the loss of continental European heritage, to the new maritime world order pursued by Queen Elisabeth of England,[5] through Effi Briest's and Friedrich Nietzsche's sacrifices to German unification (the first one, in the nineteenth century), to Asta Nielsen's embodiment of WWI trauma and the local-globalist tragic reception of Britney Spears' work. As an effect of the crypt, however, every story, as work of fiction, becomes the forecourt or preface[6] to another story consolidated under names like Effi Briest or Britney Spears, names that, after Shakespeare, travel intact over abysses of creaturely ruin, transmitted through various media.

Sufferers of war and love neuroses proved particularly suitable media receivers of a black and blueprint like Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, perhaps because Freud began to think the neuroses while reading the play or, better yet, because instinctive life simply finds a way to transmit itself over vast expansions of time and place via technical difficulties or chronic breakdowns. What makes neurotics such good recipients of crypt transmissions is the internal split that drives them. Friedrich Nietzsche is the only—at least to my knowledge—philosopher-informant of this condition, which he also likened to pregnancy, thus giving us the first inkling of an artificial womb. The first "artificial" replication of a womb is recorded in the myth of the Immaculate Conception where the ear becomes the receiving and conceiving organ. Shakespeare also used the ear as replica of the womb and its functions: the organ receives the weapon that kills the king and "Father and Mother" Hamlet, father and mother being one flesh at the moment of conception, as Hamlet tells us in act 3, scene 1. When "Father and Mother" is replaced by "Uncle and Mother," Oedipal identities split.

Ella Freeman Sharpe's interpretation of the play projected the breakdown of Hamlet's psyche, conceived as proxy for Shakespeare's condition, into the characters in the play.[7] She recognized only Ophelia, the feminine double of Hamlet, as a legitimate narcissistic object, but the play abounds with them. Her suicide, argues Sharpe, represents Hamlet's fate in miniature. Since Hamlet is unable to act, his suicide is illicit and indirect, brought about by so many unconscious events.[8] The beloved, as a cluster of repressed items from the unconscious consolidated under the name Ophelia, remote-controls Hamlet's fate from the position of her suicide. Their relationship is the prototype of all crypt transmissions where transmitting and receiving instances replicate one another in the place of their difference. The absence of Ophelia's mother shows the way in Hamlet's unconscious to a place where the unwanted get dumped. Ophelia is dumped, twice, as a girl and as her father's daughter.

Hamlet's dagger meets the wrong/right target Polonius. Like Claudius, Polonius represents the machine womb. Both characters provoke brilliant verbal repartees that replicate otherwise unavailable linguistic patterns, illustrating the unpredictability and endless versatility of the machine in relation to a subject stuck at a narcissistic stage that is primary and stricken with the *conscience* of secondary difference. Like Freud, Polonius diagnoses Hamlet as a neurotic of love. Love can make one sick not only when other demands act upon and deny its consummation, but also when narcissistic identification with the beloved causes a vertigo-inducing split in the lover. The only other drive that is strong enough to counteract love is born of its loss: the wish to eliminate a loved one for his or her infidelity or whatever else. One quick way to chill—and intensify—the longings love incites is to render the loved one, via the magical dispensation of a death wish against them, inanimate, dead, like a machine or a ghost. Once the ghost usurps every channel of libidinal discharge for Hamlet, Ophelia doesn't stand a chance of survival. She too becomes a ghost, Hamlet's techno double, heiress to the mirror and its disinherited orphan. Man against machine, the old story of misidentification with the techno double represents the central drama of the play.

Nietzsche associated his ability to pick up ghost messages with 'having small ears,' normally reserved for the 'eternal feminine.' As recipient of a crypt transmission, Nietzsche's corpus proved interchangeable with media genealogies that likewise recorded the 'birth of music' as 'ear poison.' The undisputable power of the dead over the present and the future feeds on the melancholy disposition Nietzsche did not share with some of his politically extremist readers. Even his self-professed getting over the fatal first book and document of his war neurosis, *Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geist der Musik* (*The Birth of Tragedy*) means not much more than his willingness to rewrite the future and the past. Melancholia, often implied in or as the state of encryptment, is on the contrary, an intensified and prolonged mourning that requires the admission and administration of a death wish against something or someone who once stood nearby, inimical to the crypt's transmission. Melancholia feeds on negative libido and destroys crypts as it pursues their contents single-mindedly. The crypt cannot survive the condition of mourning or melancholia as it is the reservoir of the positive libido of instinct.

The term *instinct* functions differently in the various temporal and topographic phases of psychic development in Freud. There are the obvious instincts we recognize from taboos and Oedipal crimes and punishments. There are the bewitching instincts born of retroactive projections of Oedipal instinct onto the organization of pre-oedipal relations. The instinct transmitted via the crypt is what keeps us glued to the magically produced world of the dyadic idyll "from whose bourn/No traveler returns." "The undiscovere'd country" may be the land of death only in name (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III.i). It also hosts fantasies of return to the womb. Since death is unimaginable, the dream world is installed in its place, and once tasted, the womb/tomb of dreams is never abandoned.

Manic-depression, also known as bipolar disorder, is the mistaken pop-psychology diagnosis for a number of feminine versions of Hamlet's illness in the novel and mass media, including Effi Briest and Britney Spears. An intermediary, the muse of the major studios of Berlin around 1920, Asta Nielsen, gives us the first cinematic exposure to the syndrome with her interpretation of

Hamlet as the story of a girl raised as a boy and heir to the Danish throne. Not only does this Hamlet never become a boy, but she also fails to grow up and become a ruler. Secretly in love with Horatio and with her father, this Princess Hamlet becomes a top-ranking trendsetter, a crypt companion, a poster girl for traumatized shell-shock victims, a troubled presence, and the emotional sponsor of the culture industry. In this version, every enigmatic, preternatural, or aberrant feature of the original Shakespeare character and play is usurped by the cryptic feminine libidinal constitution, which is experienced as a compulsive, irremediable, and fated-to-be-AND-not-to-be love bond, a typical love neurosis. Although Asta Nielsen's version seemingly brings us back to an earlier and less mature Shakespeare play, *Romeo and Juliet*, it also calls on *Hamlet* and, via Freud on *Hamlet*, summons the pathology behind teen girl fantasies.

A couple decades before Asta Nielsen's film reached its war-ravished audiences, Theodor Fontane changed the gender of Prince Hamlet in a literary work. His masterpiece *Effi Briest* is a veiled coming to terms with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, which he translated into German, in the terms of the modern genre of European adultery. Fontane stands at the end of that tradition as it prepares to make a new transition, or at least give over some of its franchise, to cinema and the techno media. This juncture puts Fontane in the position of bringing the genre to some kind of conclusion, while sending the genealogy of the techno heiress to the institution of girl education. The adultery novel was, without a doubt, also intended to educate young wives to be. Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Emma Bovary, and Anna Karenina were bywords in the cautionary instruction of young women. Unlike her predecessors, Effi Briest acquired the metallic ring of the Hamlet-machine. She represents the first affirmative case at least in the genre conceived with *Hamlet*, as Shakespeare's hard-won acceptance (or admission) of the premature loss of his son and, more generally, of teen suicide. Fontane was aware of his unique position and Effi is his mechanical child born of loss (the loss of old Prussia), a delegation that parallels so many case histories of female film and pop stars. Effi is not about caution and disciplinary drilling, but about enjoyment in the 'classroom' of feminine instruction, about inhabiting the "undiscovered country" or prosthetic womb of death and sleep through a reversion to the dyadic relationship of pre-Oedipal bliss. Nietzsche had envisioned his school in much the same vein. The element binding Effi's educational destiny in Fontane's school for girls to Nietzsche's utopian gymnasium, projected from the "entrails of the present" in "On the Future of Our Educational Institutions," is instinct.

Fontane also intimates at the end of his Hamlet work that, historically, instinct remains buried with the losses or losers. Rollo, Effi's dog, refuses to survive his mistress and consume her remains. He stops eating and lays himself down to die at her grave, effectively letting his heart stop beating with hers. In a fleeting interpretation of *The Tempest*, Vicky Hearne links the magic of animal training/domestication to that of the poet, both of which rely on intimate—and dangerous—knowledge of a finely tuned instinctual apparatus.[9] As his final play, *The Tempest* revisits much of what had occupied Shakespeare throughout his career as playwright. It is a companion piece to *Hamlet*, among others, where a brother is betrayed and sent to the (is)land "from whose borne no traveler returns," but, rather than appear as a ghost to a son and demand revenge, practices the magic of training a daughter's instinctual makeup to right the wrongs done to them.

Ariel is Miranda's wild instinctive imagination placed in the service of her father's book arts, just as Caliban is the creature of pure discipline and no instinct. Effi is also known as a "daughter of the air," and her name suggests ephemeral breeze, Effi Briest. Asta Nielsen and Britney Spears are likewise transmitted "on air," just as the materiality of crypt transmissions and their ability to travel across Oedipal bounds is, technically, ethereal. The crypt itself is hermetically sealed by instinct, but its transmissions need air. A ghost is said to materialize out of thin air, and Hamlet's original wish, before he met the ghost, was to melt into dew: "Oh that this too too solid flesh would melt/ Thaw and resolve itself into a dew" (I.ii).

Air, unfortunately, also brings about decay. The tragedies are not far off, since instinct cannot be aired and

must go under: Miranda is pursued by Caliban, Effi is snatched into unhappy marriage to Innstetten, Asta Nielsen suffers the fate of her Hamlet, and Spears faces all of the above. Harassed by sadistically trained imitation creatures from the wider viewer circle of the Mickey Mouse Club, Britney ends up in an unhappy marriage to one of them as she also suffers the necessity to uphold their hypocritical moral code that is no match for her instincts. The pop and film versions are less obvious as the composite image of the crypt inhabitant is not contained in a single work, but often acquires its attributes from different media. Asta Nielsen, for example, became the face of WWI German losses, just as Effi embodies those other losses that attend victory and unification. In Asta's case, however, the films and photographs take an active part in transmitting her textual legacy. Like her Hamlet, Asta suffers under an imposed male identification: shell-shocked soldiers see the dead eyes of the fallen–friend and enemy alike—in her publicity photos.

When Freud linked love and war neuroses, he opened a two-way street that was always already part of the allegorical correspondence and transference between the two conditions. The lyrics to "Out from Under" from Spears' 2008 album *Circus* trace a rudimentary crypt formation in the context of taming instinct. In the diurnal world of the "office space," which includes every space of writing and accounting, every film set, and the editing machine itself, "out from under" means (like normative mourning) the end of the workday or of overwhelming larger-than-life work assignments. The office hand and the circus ringleader have this much in common: they supervise what happens "under." The magician Hearne writes about in her contemplation of the animal trainer has the task of supervising the unconscious mourning that takes place when normative mourning is refused, as the lyrics of "Out from Under"[10] announce. The personal loss of "all the things that never were," nor will be, becomes the veritable ghostwriter of instinct. That, of course, threatens the office hand with being stuck on the unmourning stage, like Hamlet is on the "or" between to be and not to be. This illness precipitates cross-gender identity in the twentieth century and finds its first major broadcast in Asta Nielsen's version of Princess Hamlet. Unconscious mourning records instinct that goes from the open fields of untamed nature into every gesture and movement of the body's daily routine in the household, on the racetrack, or in the office. When Effi's mother begins soul-searching on her daughter's grave and asks her husband if her death may have been their fault, old von Briest refuses to go into the "open field" of the wild question of guilt or cause and effect, which require the "either/or" unknown to the unconscious: "Ah Louise, don't go on. . . . That is *too* big a subject" (*Effi Briest* 266). In the original German "too big a subject" is "ein zu weites Feld," literally, "too broad a field," which echoes Old Briest's earlier comment to Louise about Rollo's self-imposed starvation beside his mistress' grave: "Ah yes, Louise, the beasts [*Kreatur*] of the field. That's what I'm always saying. We're always talking about instinct. All in all, it's really the best thing" (*Effi Briest* 267). Old Briest knows this loss intimately, since he too endured a loveless marriage.[11] What he affirms with the last words of the novel is the existence of the kind of love instinct that goes beyond the reciprocated Oedipal bond of fulfillment if only because it has been given up. Britney's *Circus* is built on the strength of the relationship old Briest offers in the end: the unconditional devotion of the trainees to the ringleader in the contest of Oedipal desire, which, ultimately, is also conceived at the earlier phase of instinctive psychic development and, therefore, cannot be an end in itself.

A nineteenth-century predecessor to the pop song, the post card was invented to transmit messages from shell-shocked soldiers to their loved ones back home (Derrida, *Post Card*). "Back home" is the uncanny place we were supposed to leave behind, but that surrounds, and sensurrounds us, everywhere we go. A deeply felt loss and its corresponding death wish are inscribed in these transmissions, which rip the message into the two interchangeable sides, the mass-produced image cutting along the edge or contour of the future pupil of our educational institutions. In his *Einleitung zur Psychoanalyse der Kriegsneurosen* (*Introduction to Psychoanalysis and the War Neuroses*, *SE* 17: 205-216) Freud discovers the mechanism that produces the "bureaucratic" documents of mass-formatting personal grief, among which we count the postcard, open to all, and the pop song,

also an open address that unfolds an intimate message. The producer here is the neurotically inhibited "soldier never to be," or "toy soldier"[12] whose original role model is the neurotically inhibited girl unable to graduate to family and motherhood. One version of the etiology documented by the girl school of rock exploded all over the screens and screams in the 70s and Britney did not fail to pay tribute to the fallen toy soldiers in the context of her 2002 road trip film *Crossroads* that re-opened the road to maturity for the embattled office hand: ("Cherry Bomb"[13] from The Runaways, Joan Jett's "I Love Rock 'n Roll"[14], and Britney's "I Love Rock 'n Roll"[15]). Away from the action, at the home front, she sits behind the control (school) desk from whence she mass-produces and projects her own image of the cripple become medium: "If You Seek Amy."[16]

In his own contemplation of the "future of our educational institutions," Jacques Derrida cites Nietzsche's "On Redemption" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) on "inverse cripples:" "This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field" (*Ear* 3). The image is reminiscent of Freud's definition of modern man as a "prosthetic god" who grew techno extensions in the place of missing body parts, and of another cripple with oversized ears and hands, Mickey "the Mouse who roared" or, less cynically put, sang our lullabies. His club of perpetual—nihilistic—childhoods is the educational institution next to the haunted playground that graduated Britney Spears to "Slave 4 U."[17]

Slaves, like machines, prostheses, and girls are not expected to have autonomous feelings outside the range of those ontologically felt by more appropriate subjects like dad, the master, the engineer, and any Oedipal body-proprietor, aka the phenomenological Subject. Yet, Britney tells us in this song that she has feelings, oversized feelings of her own. She grows them in the place where they overstep the ring or glass casket holding the exquisite remains and perfect body parts of "Hollywood Girl Lucky" or Snow White with the "perfect smile," and in the place where Joan Jett and Cherie Currie fell. Feelings then copy the song lyrics to the syllable at the point of loss, the "battlefield" of scattered remains giving rise to self-reflexivity. Mickey Mouse too sings along with Britney: "I know I may be young, [forever], but I got feelings too. . . . So let me go and just listen" ("Slave 4 U"). What Mickey and Britney feel is what binds them to us via YouTube and via the letters of the name to be filled in the appropriate breach or bracket of an office document. Britney's name, already given at the front or office, is all feelings, and feelings, Shakespeare taught us, break through to reality at the point of disjointed time or mental derangement. Walt Disney too suffered a nervous breakdown—or postpartum depression—once Mickey's image was complete and unchangeable. Along the crypt partitions that carve out the unalterable image in letters, Britney's voice traces the latest record of the breath that filled Mickey's and Cherie's lungs, giving us hope that Britney's apprenticeship may lead to graduation in some still standing tower or other.

When Britney heard her audience cry "Gimme More,"[18] after her career had allegedly fallen through the cracks of mental illness, she responded with a song that left no illusion she had weaved untorn. "It's Britney, Bitch" is addressed to the "(h)and" or spear that links her name to Shakespeare's signature stretched across the crimson instinctual makeup of her audience. A bitch it is to look the uncanny, that which was supposed to remain hidden, in the face. With Britney, Walt Disney finally got to "heir" the home front that got swept under the red carpet once Mickey was complete. What were once a guarantor of immortality and carrier of the jubilant perfect smile returns as the frightening ghost of a murder victim, who initiates the haunted line of succession and inheritance. The male voiceover from "Gimme More," announcing the permanence of her appeal, echoes the demand of the slave who cannot keep up with the suicidal jump into the abyss he requires of his masters and remains naively stuck on an illusory narcissism of power. On the other end is the bitch of having to identify with the fallen one.

In his study of the German mourning pageant, Walter Benjamin paraphrases Nietzsche's find from the book that documented his war neurosis, *The Birth of Tragedy*, his vision of a powerful ruler of the dead, the tragic figure, leaping over the abyss into which he saw himself fall. Benjamin writes, "ancient tragedy is the fettered slave on the triumphal car of the […] mourning play"

(*Origin* 100). Unlike tragedy, which enacts a judgment over a powerful figure, and condemns it for all eternity, the mourning pageant is devoted to the simple consumption of its exquisite corpse. Benjamin thus gave us a happy Hegelian formula for the containment of tragic breakthroughs that, nevertheless, fails to count the loss of a certain heir. The judge who took Britney's kids was not serving justice as much as the pleasure principle of modern spectacle production, which brings tragedy back in our midst.

Benjamin's study examines the German mourning pageant only in name. The corpus on which he writes is Shakespeare's. Like many other German translators and interpreters of Shakespeare, Benjamin sought the formulas of the self-engineering genius of modern drama in the German transmission, which proved capable of developing the otherwise illegible negative or supplemental print. A trance movement—transcendence, translation, transference—is inherent in the figure produced by the German overture, the forecourt and ecstatic heart of Shakespeare's dramas. The element and experience of ecstasy was recorded by the first literal translator of Shakespeare into German, Moses Mendelssohn, who chose Hamlet's teen diary formatted soliloquies to illustrate, and at the same time invent, the modern update to the ancient aesthetic category of the sublime.

The continuity shot to the classical period Mendelssohn cut into his speculations was, however, illusory. The conditions for Hamlet's transfer to German letters were set in motion by Gutenberg and Martin Luther's translation of the Bible, in other words by technological invention and religious reform, both sponsored by Christianity. The translation project created not only the first reading community of transgressors, who from then on hung, along with thieves and criminals, on the noose called image or damage, but also granted childhood, via the new literacy requirement of socialization, ontological status and children humanity. Goethe signed an eternal contract of infinite translatability between the two corpuses when he set out to supply the invisible space of childhood and turned the horrors of Shakespeare's dramas into child's play. Freud channeled this insight when he set out to systematize the science of childhood and child rearing. The project began with the demand to heal a "feminine" invalidity, a certain psychic infertility, which had beset a generation of women in Europe following the explosion of a bureaucratic industry and culture that employed women for the first time in history. The forms of female illness—innocent childhood dramas—and records of the various stages of reaching maturity, shape the products of the office and the recording studio, home of our entertainment.

"Gimme More" is not Britney's first song from beyond the pleasure principle, but, like "Slave 4 U," it stages the point of broken and hence doubly-fortified identification. As a figure for the prosthetic breast that keeps audiences glued to the screens and sensurround of childhood, Britney had to go all the way to the front, to the front of the line that retains the difference between the word and the deed. Hamlet is the classic figure stuck on the impossibility of deciding between the mediated and the real, to be or not. "Gimme More" is more than a slide into the abyss. Having sent her away, in a fit of anger at her betrayal, the audience brings her back to play, but this time as the invalid, which reinstalls the blood drive of the remote as it transfigures the controlled body into the image. How to play this role is something Britney could have learned only from Uncle Disney, who raised her. The only impediment to the death drive of wanting the same, generation in generation out, is the loss of body parts and bodies, EveryBodies looking and watching and looking for some . . . body . . . parts . . . that would once more allow one to participate in the life of the group body—("Everybody").[19]

Psychoanalysis is a latecomer on the scene of transgressive mass formatting, but since its invention coincides with a major stopover in media history, the deployment of film technology in the libidinal life of Western civilization, the human science par excellence proved an efficient chemical developer in profiling femininity. In *The New Introductory Lectures* (*SE* 22) Freud argues that weaving, knitting, and, by extension, text production are among the only achievements females have contributed to civilization. The natural counterpart to this cultural accomplishment, Freud writes, is genital hair, designed to cover up the missing body part or the difference between the sexes. Once text and texture are developed, genital hair, of course, becomes superfluous. Text

is among the early media crossing the divide of gender identification, falling or following through the cracks of our separation from the body.

Britney's first breakthrough came with "Hit Me, Baby, One More Time,"[20] a record that tracks the female mode of longing and weaving fantastic instinctual satisfaction in the place of a missing something or someone. The sadistic moment in the fantasy of oral consummation of the missing part or body corresponds to the other "hit," the hit of toxicity, or fist of destructivity, when the fantastic formation breaks through the texture of mediatic overexposure and takes hold of libidinal bonds. Another hit, "Toxic,"[21] which, in spite of the immediacy announced in the title, belongs to the playground of the Mickey Mouse Club. "Toxic" came to life for Britney when the intrapsychic apparatus of her text production, otherwise supporting an allegorical milieu of miniaturized tokens of childhood, materialized as fake marriages, overexposed questionable sex, falling or forsaken babies, and public breakdowns. The troubled relationship to the family already indicates a level of toxicity in Britney's love bonds, which include her audience. The early separation sparking fantasies of merger, required by her membership in the Disney group, has trouble with mother as prerequisite. In her place, the life of the group grows uncontrollably intoxicating both in the framework of the narcissistic relation to one's image and as a point of identification with the group ego ideal, which spells out the eventual demise of the latter in the failure of the moral system. The story was first ghost-sighted by Shakespeare when he wrote his *Hamlet*. The succession to the throne, of Elvis, goes over a toxic relationship to a ghost produced by the perceived crime of a mother and an uncle, and who models the surveillance apparatus that caught it in its Web.

The "achievement" Freud attributes to the feminine function is, on the one hand, a contribution to cultural advancement responsible for the containment of destructive fantasies within a livable and mediated environment and, on the other, a constant threat of epidemic breakouts. According to *The New Introductory Lectures*, the development of the female differs from that of the male by the two additional phases of psychic formation the girl must work through before she matures as woman or mother. Although the Oedipal phase is the same for both sexes insofar as it is held together by the fantasy of reanimating a totemic mother, boys and girls give up the object on entirely different hands. Boys get in trouble with the law of the father, which forbids self-satisfaction along with the desire for mother, who remains the object of strife. The totem stands in the way of an otherwise unchanged object of satisfaction. Girls, in comparison, give up mother and the organ of self-satisfaction, any body part that marks a difference, because both are devalued in the economy of pleasure. The organ of satisfaction grows loathsome and is either hidden, vomited inside, or flushed as feces. In the last case, the girl regresses to anal relations with the mother, which entail sadistic mastery and the gifting of anal babies. The girl is only able to make good this failure in acts of sublimation, whether in pop, as mass formation, or in high art, as individual achievement. In the case of internal vomiting, conversely, she is able to progress along the "normal" path of development, but also retains an expansive memory bank that not only holds the past within living reach, but also, from the position of hidden identification with the forsaken mother, is capable of remote controlling the libidinal life of the group.

The double function of weaving, to hold and to imperil, corresponds to the two phases in the development of femininity we find out of joint with the time of maturing masculinity, namely, the requirement to give up mother as the beloved in order to usher in the girl's Oedipal phase. The renewed identification with the renounced object upon the arrival of children is the second additional phase, which, however, overlaps with mass formation and as such can be shared with boys, albeit under different circumstances. The cultural work of preservation falls in the province of the female function. The mounting material from the ongoing work of repression can break through resistances and back into the real only by pathways that lead the girl to the maternal position, which is also the position required for the socialization of boys.

Freud never stated the connection between the out-of-joint phases of feminine development and Hamlet's predicaments explicitly, but as first patient of psychoanalysis and the underground "mole" of the classic Oedipal

scenario, Hamlet qualifies as female. The bond grows visible in the vampiric mode of film development. Like a girl, Hamlet has to give up mother as the object and fall in love with father. This means Hamlet has to take the call to revenge, and then arrive at perfect identification with mother when he cradles Ophelia's dead body in the grave, surely the beginning of his cure, but which comes too late. That scenario was unveiled in Asta Nielsen's interpretation. In this negative development, Hamlet is forced into life-long transvestism by her mother, whose ambition to preserve the Danish crown for a male heir in the wake of the false news of King Hamlet's death on the battlefield spills over the bounds of gender difference and sacrifices a daughter. Ophelia, whose mother is missing, is the "natural" model for this type of sacrifice. Hamlet's intense attachment to his father and to Horatio thus gets a makeover under the silver light of incestuous teen girl fantasies. The film doubles, then, as the blueprint for the genesis of the female pop star.

A good number of Britney's songs, like "Lucky," "Oops, I Did It Again,"[22] "Me Against the Music,"[23] are predicated on the kind of inaction or inability to step into the real that we know from Hamlet's teen diary monologues. The girl with the bow of Cupid, herself impermeable to her own weapons, derives the psychic power of her lasting appeal from the revenge fantasy that Freud discovered is energetically counter-attacked, by savages and neurotics, with a "taboo on virginity." The diminished capacity for justice Freud observes in women is due to the necessity to overcome envy, which is a constitutional factor, albeit transformed, in the practice of justice. The texture that covers up the missing coveted object also disposes of the demands posed by revenge fantasies, which support the circulation systems of the court. A later phase in the development of the female, the vengeful reaction to the narcissistic injury of defloration is perhaps better suited to act as a digestive for the bitterly denied "penis envy," possibly Freud's most controversial formulation. The inability to metabolize envy, which is an absolute requirement on the way to motherhood/womanhood, belongs to a particular cluster of symptoms that hangs on inadmissible anal relations with the mother.

The question for Hamlet, we know, was never "to be or not," but rather how to get off the "or," heard in German as *Ohr*, ear. Indeed, it wasn't until the German translation of *Hamlet*, which required the large-scale metabolization via Goethe's Romanticism and Classicism, that psychoanalysis received the lost "hair," laid him flat, and began to think femininity as compatible with the media-technological advances since Gutenberg. *Ohr* occupies the place (in the body as in grammar) that separates, divides, and injures. As such it also becomes the recipient of the hottest fantasies of compensation for loss and pain.

Ernest Jones traced the creation fantasy of "inseminating" the ear with the spirit of the father to the anal phase of libidinal development. In his study "The Madonna's Conception through the Ear," he argues that the notion of a higher spirit is a displaced, sublimated version of anal emissions (*Conception* 266-357).[24] The conception of one's own and God's creativity is initiated by this stage of early reproductive research when fertility is imagined along the lines of anal relations with the maternal body, which receives the gift and demands the stimulation of particular organs. In their sublimated forms, these fantasies fuel art production, which counts on a certain self-sufficiency of an agency that is not necessarily within one's reach—we call it "inspiration." Britney's "Breathe on Me" blows re-creational powers to the punished or cut-off "touching" body part (hand *Ohr* ear *Ohr* something), in which place she appears as the prosthetic device allowing boys *and* girls to participate in the maternal dis-position, to conjure the face that inspires. Art and religious exercise, Jones argues, carry out the task of sublimating the wishes and compulsions attending the anal phase. That some of the imitations and impersonations of pop artists are particularly disturbing and unrecognizable only goes to prove that regressions and desublimations, which undo the achievement of the artist, are of the order of a perverse global reception. The sale of Britney's hair highlights the global trajectory of pop art in breakdown mode. The loss of a proper heir to a pop icon is inevitable and of the order of tragedy, our tragedy. Britney illustrated the tragedy with a brilliant act of self-inoculation against the losses her lyrics track when she disposed publicly of the Rheingold locks. Yet the removal of the work

from the context in which it is conceived, an achievement of the "female" in a Western frame of reference, reduces the heritage to the disposable sameness of feces, or money, or nothingness. When Britney cancelled a concert in Mexico City for fear of lightning storms, she instinctively guarded against the kind of Frankensteinian recreation that threatens to reduce her legacy to the undifferentiated sameness of interchangeable dead body parts.

Although Freud set out to "cure" female invalidity, his science provided the instructional manual to the new woman who is no longer limited to transmitting clandestine histories via reproduction or by burying unmournable losses in her children's bodies, but has the media technological apparatus at her disposal to replicate what could not be put to rest in peace. The avuncular structure supporting this line of transmission of tradition is already coded in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but was withdrawn from mass release until WWI deployed the new metaphysics that required the abandonment of birthright positions and sexual identifications, as well as an active disposition, and forged clandestine affect out of playgrounds such as the Mickey Mouse Club or an MTV line of royal succession. The ear is both the privileged organ of covert affects and pleasures and the one that is lost to a certain inability to substitute for or articulate one's losses. The prosthetic extension receives messages from the undead, stereo enhanced, and produces formats such as Effi's love letters, the postcard, or the pop song out of the rubble that litters media battlefields with human body parts. Tragic loss thus gets a perfect makeover on condensed, condemned, and hence inactive, mourning stage sets. The inside-outside chance of therapeutic intervention comes when Britney hits home, one more time, with the force of some spear of ecstasy or acidic arrow signature.

Notes

[1] Rickels begins his contemplation of the crypt medium with his 1988 study *Aberrations of Mourning: Writing on German Crypts* (WSUP) and transplants the German-bred finds onto Hollywood territory, while pursuing a crypt transmission, with his 1991 *Case of California*.

[2] Rickels writes: "The slowdown of developmental rates which underlies our neotenous species takes the form of long periods of gestation, extended childhoods, and the longest life span among mammals. That we are always in a state of development we owe to our neotenous nature. Mickey Mouse, too, developed up to a point—of perpetually adorable youthfulness. From the *Mickey Mouse Club* to MTV, neotenization is the chosen channel: to become what one is becomes the other—nihilistic—program of childhoods. A certain backfire of adolescence fueled by MTV has required inclusion of educational spots within the ongoing music-video show since countless addicted 'children' are tied, like their teen models, only to the tube" (*Case* 68).

[3] Avital Ronell presents the haunted transmission between Goethe and Freud in her 1986 study *Dictations: On Haunted Writing*.

[4] Abraham and Torok's case study of one of Freud's famous patients, Sergei Pankeiev, made the "crypt" a psychoanalytic concept and byword par excellence. They reopened a closed case along the partitions of the verbal remains it left behind and pursued the encrypted inhabitants of a family theater with a sense of aesthetics compatible with postwar sensibilities, which often conflated the crypt as repository of unmournable loss and the creature as the mourned dead. Rickels' and Ronell's studies reinstate the difference.

[5] In his postwar lecture series, which culminated in the publication of *Hamlet oder Hekuba: Der Einbruch der Zeit in das Spiel* (*Hamlet or Hecuba: Breakthrough of historical time in the play*) Carl Schmitt argues that the central conflict of the play is the historical contest between the two queens, Elisabeth of England and Mary of Scotland. Although the study, a precursor of American new historicist criticism, favors the historical winner, Elisabeth over Mary, it also represents a coming to terms with WWII losses.

[6] Jacques Derrida wrote the preface to Abraham and Torok's rereading of the Wolf Man Case for the original publication in French in 1976. In "Fors," then, he linked the task of writing a preface to the task of transmitting crypt contents. The preface functions much like an encryption that replicates itself in the main course of

reading. Derrida thus directly implicated his practice of reading and writing, famously dubbed deconstruction, as explicitly cryptonymic.

[7] In her 1929 essay "The Impatience of Hamlet," Ella Freeman Sharpe argued that Shakespeare avoided a nervous breakdown by projecting the various conflicting agencies in his psyche onto the characters of the play. She was also among the first psychoanalytic theorists to recognize Ophelia as a product of the narcissistic phase and feminine double of Hamlet, and not as an Oedipal object, which is how Freud and Jones treated her.

[8] Jacques Lacan's interpretation of the play, featured in the seminar and published as "Desire and the Interpretation of Desire in Hamlet," reads Hamlet's fate as a relentless race toward a fatal appointment with desire determined by unconscious motives.

[9] In the chapter "Rights, Autism, and the Rougher Magics," Vicky Hearne offers an analysis of the poetic task among the many tasks that bind us to language—and the rest of the media—via our relationship to animals.

[10] "Out from Under": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPI_XOIKI9c.

[11] In her study "Effi Briest. Die Entwicklung einer Depression," ("Effi Briest. The Development of a Depression"). Gisela Greve argues that Effi's depression develops out of an early childhood experience of a loveless marriage. Having lived with a father who is unloved by his wife, Effi finds herself betrothed to a similarly distant and unlovable husband.

[12] "Toy Soldier": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMs2bExhyr8&feature=related.

[13] "Cherry Bomb": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMDn6V7ZLhE.

[14] Joan Jett's "I Love Rock 'n Roll": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3T_xeoGES8.

[15] Britney's "I Love Rock 'n Roll": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw3Ubww07Ew.

[16] "If You Seek Amy": http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/0aEnnH6t8Ts.

[17] "I'm a Slave 4 U": http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/Mzybwwf2HoQ.

[18] "Gimme More": http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/elueA2rofoo.

[19]"Everybody": http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUOHbeqfWio.

[20] "Hit Me, Baby, One More Time": http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/C-u5WLJ9Yk4.

[21] "Toxic": http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/LOZuxwVk7TU.

[22] "Oops, I Did It Again": http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/12/CduA0TULnow.

[23] "Me Against the Music": http://www.youtube.com/user BritneySpearsVEVO#p/u/11/clwLKJ294u4.

[24] See Rickels' trans-valuation of this inter-text in *Aberrations of Mourning* (chapter 4).

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