

# imaginations



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## PREFACE

AUTHOR • LAURENCE A. RICKELS  
ARTIST • POLA SPERBER

Laurence A. Rickels moved to the Coast in 1981 upon completing his graduate training in German philology at Princeton University. While in California he established his reputation as theorist and earned his license in psychotherapy. He has published numerous studies of the phenomenon he calls “unmourning,” a term that became the title of his trilogy: *Aberrations of Mourning*, *The Case of California*, and *Nazi Psychoanalysis*. His more recent publications include *The Devil Notebooks* and *I Think I Am: Philip K. Dick*. In April 2011 Rickels followed the call or “Ruf” to the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe, where he is Klaus Theweleit’s successor as professor of art and theory.

Pola Sperber, currently enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, class of John Bock, worked from 2005-2009 as sculptor for theater design at the Südwestrundfunk (SWR) in Baden-Baden. In 2009 she received the Baden-Baden Award for “best sculptor.”

Laurence A. Rickels déménage sur la côte Ouest en 1981 lorsqu’il termine ses études de troisième cycle en philologie à l’Université de Princeton. En Californie, il se fait une réputation de théoricien et il obtient un permis d’exercice de psychothérapie. Il publie des nombreux textes sur le phénomène qu’il appelle « unmourning », appellation qui devient le titre de sa trilogie : *Aberrations of Mourning*, *The Case of California*, et *Nazi Psychoanalysis*. Des plus récentes publications sont *The Devil Notebooks* et *I Think I Am : Philip K. Dick*. En avril 2011 il répond à l’appel ou « Ruf » de l’Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe pour succéder à Klaus Theweleit au poste de professeur d’arts et de théorie.

Pola Sperber, actuellement inscrite à l’Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe sous la direction de John Bock, travaille comme sculpteur scénographique au *Südwestrundfunk (SWR)* à Baden-Baden. Elle reçoit le *Baden-Baden Award* du meilleur sculpteur en 2009.

By “crypt study,” I mean to emplace each reading in this dossier in specialized relationship to the “case study” genre. While the metapsychology or system that Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok sought to convey with their reading of the “cryptonymy” of Freud’s case study of the Wolfman has been lost or integrated within the host of re-readings of psychoanalysis after Freud, discrete insights into and images of the melancholic condition surrounding the “crypt” have continued to open condemned sites of identification. With the conclusion of the last sentence, we have already entered, by metaphor, the radically anti-metaphorical status of melancholia’s crypts.



From the start of his theorization of psychic reality, Freud set melancholia apart, first as narcissistic neurosis (in contrast to the transference neuroses), then as psychosis at the front of the line of the ever deepening distance from transference understanding and treatment. In relation to schizophrenia, for example, melancholia is the original borderline psychosis drawing the line of legibility between neurosis and psychosis inside psychosis itself. In my 2010 study of Philip K. Dick’s oeuvre and its intertexts, I tried to explore and construct, on an endopsychic-genealogical basis, if not in fact, the way in which melancholic encryption leads, like a kind of spirit guide, to the stabilization, encapsulation, and legibility of such extreme psychotic states as Daniel Paul Schreber’s paranoid schizophrenia. It was in his study of Schreber that Freud advised that the details of delusional formation do more than reflect or illustrate an inside view of the illness itself; they constitute, as endopsychic perception, a duplication down to these details of the very theory that understands the illness on the turf and terms of psychic reality. Sometimes psychoanalysis is what it talks about. And that is how psychoanalysis relates to, internalizes, or syndicates outside influences and references. No longer will genealogy be possible without this endopsychic relationship to mourning and its aberrations.

What Freud accomplished in the short hand of theory over the read body of Schreber’s *Memoirs* was reopened by Ludwig Binswanger in the long hand of phenomenology via his case studies of the separate words and worlds of psychosis. Following Binswanger, we learned how to explore the outer space of psychotic illness with the openness to detail and impression that the first mapping of an unknown territory requires. The immersion in the object of study, rather than the application of theory, lends to crypt study, too, the quality of encounter with the other that upholds those standards of legibility which cannot be subsumed by explanation. It follows,



therefore, that crypt students not only read better, but they also take more risks with their writing.

While the shell shock victims of WWI introduced into psychoanalytic theory the upward mobilization of doubling, it was the victims of Nazi persecution who brought home the doubling of trauma to a point of no return, no return on the investment in loss's deposit, the point beyond or before metaphor and substitution. It is out of the lexicon of Holocaust survival that Abraham and Torok carried forward the concept of the crypt. While philosophers during and after WWII turned to psychoanalysis for their mourning address, psychoanalysis itself delved ever more deeply and complexly into the study of mourning until the overriding theorization to which this study henceforth belonged became more accurately comprehensible as that of unmourning.

I will not summarize in advance the studies comprising this dossier. But I will sketch the outlines of their diversity as a group. I do so because the authors invited to contribute were not exogamous choices, but are all, albeit in varying degrees, my former students. While four worked closely with me in California, another was attached to me briefly in person as post-doc at UC Santa Barbara. Two more attended seminars I offered while guest professor at New York University, where they were the students of the other leader in the field of crypt study, Avital Ronell. During my stint as ghost-*Arbeiter* in New York, somewhere between my past life in California and the new prospect of a career move to Germany, I decided to compile this document of a teaching, which, as the contributors in their own writing introduce and model, can be recognized as a new praxis.



In four studies, a specific encryptment of loss inside a literary corpus comes under scrutiny. Of these four, two supplement the tracking of the crypt with considerations of endopsychic genealogy (like the history of media of which psychoanalysis is as much a component part as a reflection upon it). A fifth study considers how encryptment impinges on processes of understanding within historical perspectives that are properly academic. Crypt study insinuates itself thus as a new kind of psychoanalytic contribution to the collection of disciplines known as cultural studies. One more study could be characterized as a failed crypt study: in addressing the transmission of crisis, this study uncovers a phantasmatic installation of successful mourning in the trappings of encryptment, but from which the crypts of attachment have been evacuated as contaminants. Finally there is a study that, following the transmission of the crypt of more generalized trauma, presents its results

in the domain of metapsychology, thereby contributing directly to the re-reading of Freud's science. Thus the selection concludes within the full range of what I have tried to model as endopsychic genealogy.

While I was concluding the edition of these texts, I had already commenced teaching at the Academy of Fine Arts in Karlsruhe. I encountered in the art work of several of the students attending my opening seminar, "Germany. A Science Fiction," other openings into crypt study, which, though I would rather not identify them as such as yet, I nevertheless add in juxtaposition to the text portion. I do so more in my capacity as curator of group exhibitions than as editor seeking illustrations. At this border of unidentified seeing or theorizing, I sign my preface with affirmation.

Image Notes

p.3 Evi p.4 Nanna und Chrischan p.5 Zuhause

## MISSING LETTERS

AUTHOR • CHRISTOPHER LEE

ARTIST • SASCHA BROSAMER

This paper tracks the symptom of ‘missing letters’ in order to connect the anxiety that permeates August Strindberg’s life and works to his destiny as the carrier of his dead sister’s crypt. In his 1887 essay “‘Soul Murder’ (*A Propos* ‘Rosmersholm’),” Strindberg reveals that the bottom-line of his anxiety is not interpersonal conflict, but the potential for loss that always accompanies transmitted messages along their itineraries. By couching this threat of loss in the image of missing letters, Strindberg establishes the interchangeability between letters that go missing in transit to those missing letters that enter the corpus uninvited through the apertures of communication. Following the trajectory of these missing letters in his oeuvre (most notably, in *The Father*, *Miss Julie*, and *The Dance of Death I*), the paper eventually locates at the (missing) dead center of Strindberg’s literary corpus the phantom transmission from mother to son of the author’s younger sister Eleonora.

Born in Seoul, Korea, Chris Lee moved to Virginia, where he finished his schooling, and attended the University of Virginia, intending to study philosophy and Classics. However, a chance encounter with Gilles Deleuze in a Spinoza class developed into a strong interest in postmodern thought and psychoanalysis, and ultimately led him to pursue his interest in psychoanalytic theory and modernist literature at the UCSB, where he received his Ph.D. in 2010. In his dissertation, Lee addressed those foreign bodies that go undetected in the canons of literary history, calling attention to those aspects of Strindberg, Virginia Woolf, and Beckett that get passed over as the Unreadable (or simply as the unread).

Before commencing his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, class of Franz Ackermann, Sascha Brosamer trained as a paramedic and was enrolled for two years in the “Music and Media Art” program at the State Academy of Music in Bern, Switzerland.

Cet article suit le phénomène des « lettres disparues » pour faire le lien entre les grandes inquiétudes qui imprègnent la vie et les œuvres d’August Strindberg et son destin de porter la crypte de sa sœur décédée. Dans son essai écrit en 1887, *Soul Murder (A Propos Rosmerholm)*, Strindberg révèle que le résultat de ses grandes inquiétudes n’est pas un conflit interpersonnel, mais la probabilité des messages de se perdre en cours de route. En déguisant la menace de perte en l’image des lettres disparues, Strindberg établit l’interchangeabilité entre les lettres disparues en transit et celles non sollicitées qui pénètrent le corpus à travers les ouvertures de communication. En suivant la trajectoire de ces lettres disparues dans ces œuvres (notamment dans *Père*, dans *Mademoiselle Julie* et dans *La danse de mort I*), cet article trouve finalement la transmission fantôme de mère à fils de la sœur cadette Eleonora au centre mort (absent ou disparu) du corpus littéraire.

Chris Lee, né à Séoul en Corée, déménage en Virginie où il finit ses études secondaires. Il s’inscrit à l’Université de Virginie avec l’intention d’étudier la philosophie et les lettres classiques. Cependant, il prend de l’intérêt pour la pensée postmoderne, ainsi que pour la psychanalyse grâce à une rencontre fortuite avec Gilles Deleuze dans le cadre d’un cours sur Spinoza. En raison de cette rencontre il développe son intérêt pour la théorie psychanalytique, ainsi que pour la littérature moderniste à l’Université de Californie à Santa Barbara, où il obtient son doctorat en 2010. Sa thèse porte sur aux œuvres étrangères omises dans les canons de la littérature en soulignant les aspects considérés *unreadable* (ou simplement *unread*) dans l’œuvre de Strindberg, de Virginia Wolf et de Beckett.

Avant de commencer ses études à l’Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe sous la direction de Franz Ackermann, Sascha Brosamer reçoit une formation d’auxiliaire médical. Il suit aussi deux ans du programme *Musique et arts médiatiques* au Conservatoire de Berne en Suisse.





Due in no small part to his extravagant statements on women and the women's movement, August Strindberg's literary career is too easily defined by the fierce intersexual conflicts that marked both his most famous plays and his life. This caricatured view has perhaps had the regrettable effect of making him one of those unread writers who nevertheless occupy, if in name alone, prominent places in our culture. However, by tracing the missing places that Strindberg insistently includes in his writings, it is possible to see through the smokescreen of external conflicts and see at the core of Strindberg's literary career and mission the sometimes conflicting drive to stage a missing letter that he was entrusted to carry, at the same as he preserved that letter from the perils of exposure.

"'Soul Murder' (*A propos* 'Rosmersholm')" (1887), an essay written at the inception of his dramatic career, invites this cryptological reading of the anxieties that Strindberg shaped into his dramas. The power of *suggestion* is a readily recognizable theme in Strindberg's plays—that is, the potential that one person may sabotage another person's psyche merely through regular channels of communication. "Soul murder" begins as a speculation on that theme, which he had recently explored in *The Father* (1886). In modern times, he writes, murder is replaced by soul murder, for a modern conspirator eschews the ostentations of direct force, relying instead on the clandestine method of soul murder (*själamord*) or psychic suicide (*självord*):

In the past one killed one's adversary without trying to persuade him; nowadays one creates a majority against him, 'prevails upon' him, exposes his intentions, ascribes to him intentions he does not have, deprives him of his livelihood, denies him social standing, makes him look ridiculous—in short, tortures him to death by lies or drives him insane instead of killing him. (*Selected Essays* 67)

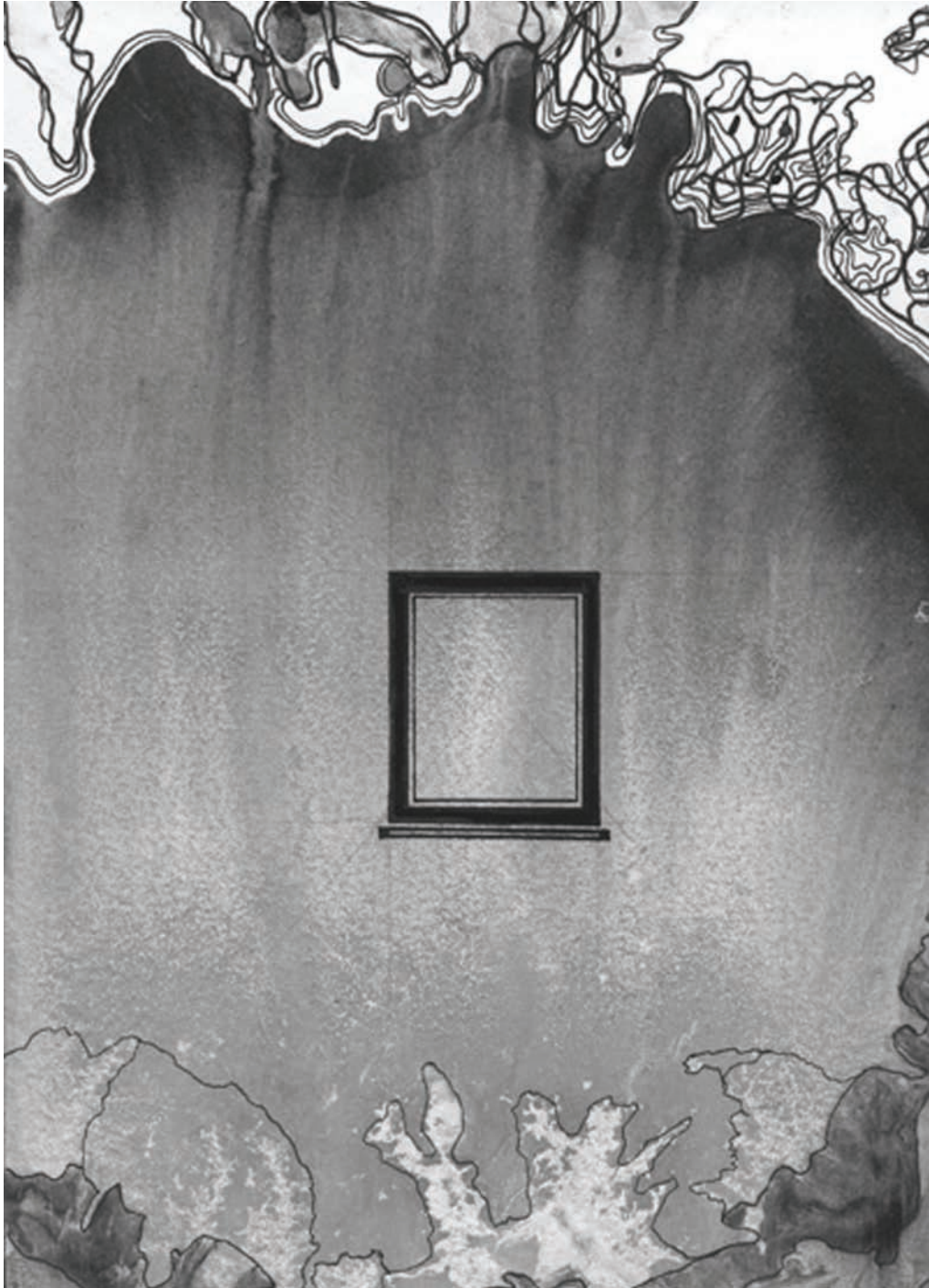
Revealing the influence of persecution mania—that would later culminate in a four-year period (1893-1897) of recurring bouts of paranoid delusions—Strindberg then explains how soul murder works by offering examples that come straight out of his real—or really imagined—life. The first is "shelving," which he illustrates with reference to "a great actor [...] recently mur-

dered in the following way" (67). The soul-murdering director offers the actor a lucrative contract, one that grants the director, however, control over the relay between the actor and his public, whereby he wields the power to waste the actor's talent either by depriving him of roles or by giving him mismatched roles. Another example is that of the publisher who directs the exchange between a journalist and his public, a scenario "known in America as 'the handcuffs'" (67). Strindberg had actually accused his publisher Gustav Philipson of this indiscretion (Lagercrantz 236-37). After having granted an influential journalist a contract, the editor lets the manuscript go missing, hiding it in a drawer until it becomes old news. Eventually, the victim of soul murder will lose his will to live, and end up acting out the compatibility between soul murder and suicide, between *själamord* and *självord*.

However, just as the progression between *själamord* and *självord* depends on a letter that drops out, Strindberg's speculation, too, narrows its focus on the missing document itself as the source of soul murder. Early examples had highlighted those positive persecuting forces that hide documents (or hides the actor like he is a document to be shelved) as a means to soul murder. In the final example of soul murder, however, the focus shifts from the murder in causing some documents to go missing to the murder that inheres in missing documents themselves. Here is the final example:

Far simpler forms of torturing people to death can also serve as ingredients. One lets a manuscript or two get lost in the post. A vacuum then arises in a writer's psyche; there is a break in the line, so that the circuit is interrupted; the chain of development is broken, so that the next time he takes up his pen he does not know what he has written (and had published) or not written. He begins to repeat himself, referring to texts that he believes the reader knows, but which the latter has never heard of. His writing disintegrates, and he can no longer collect his everywhere dispersed thoughts. (68)

As one can see, this final soul murder by purloining of the letter is now no longer formulated in terms of dying to someone as either expression or knowledge, that is, input or output of information, as in the ex-



amples of shelving and handcuffs. The final example instead understands soul murder as a letter that goes missing in transit, but stays *in* transit as a missing letter. A break in the line, according to this formulation, does not merely create an interruption in knowledge. Whatever was missing from communication enters the channels of communication as a vacuum and becomes encysted within the writer himself. The paranoid fear of psychic murder that Strindberg first sought to restrict to the interpersonal setting becomes, in this final example, unmoored from the many imaginary adversaries who were summoned by Strindberg throughout his life to contain his anxiety and aggressiveness. What remains once the smoke settles is the murderous potential that inheres in the postal system itself, namely the always-existing potential of the letter to go missing and then come back as soul murder.

Indeed, even Strindberg's title for the essay, "'Soul Murder' (*A propos* 'Rosmersholm')," reflects his wariness of the missing letter. The quotation marks surrounding the word 'soul murder' and the binding parentheses that guard the name *Rosmersholm* indicate the care with which Strindberg approached the topic, lest the missing letter in the play gets out of hand and go astray, only to come back to and into the writer as his disintegration. Just as he tried syntactically to bind the threats to his writing, Strindberg's essay obscures his fear of missing letters under the smokescreen of misogyny and interpersonal battle, characterizing the soul murder in *Rosmersholm* as a psychic manipulation by Rebecca. However, *Rosmersholm*, like so many of Ibsen's dramas, is centered on the message that goes missing, only to return as a source of catastrophe. One has only to turn to some of the most famous dramas of Ibsen. In *A Doll's House*, it is the letters bearing Nora's forged signatures that, once forgotten, return to destroy the fragile equilibrium Nora tried to maintain. In *Hedda Gabler*, Løvborg's missing manuscript, after making its way into Hedda's hands, ends up producing, not the truth Hedda had sought for, but only a catastrophic end. In *Rosmersholm*, it is Beata's letter that, sent just before her death and in Mortensgaard's possession, allows her, years after her death, to defeat Rosmer's plans to supplant her and accept Rebecca (as well as the ideals of progressive politics for which Rebecca stands).



After beginning the essay as a confident scientist of soul murder, by the end Strindberg shows himself completely fallen prey to the threat of missing letters, whether as actual or potential. Strindberg ends the essay with a hopeful promise to get to the bottom of soul murder by writing a fragmentary announcement, exclaiming: “About that, another time” (*Selected Essays* 72). But this promise of maybe a manuscript or two that will clear the line between Strindberg and his reader points only to the fact that Strindberg never wrote this follow-up. Thus the soul murder essay ends up merely staging, as a conspicuous vacuum in Strindberg’s literary corpus, the missing manuscript that perhaps, but always potentially, got lost in transit.

All his life, Strindberg was pathologically wary of the capacity of things to go missing, even in his post-*Inferno* years, when he was presumably recovered from his paranoia. When his third wife Harriet Bosse, then estranged, lost her engagement ring during a visit to Strindberg’s house and later spoke to him of her suspicion of the maid, Strindberg first furiously refuted the charge, only to break down in tears when the theft was confirmed (Paulson 113-14).

His relatively late turn to drama, too, could be seen as a symptomatic preface to the *Inferno* years, when his obsessions reached their pathological climax in middle age. Drama is, after all, a genre that is missing its core. Referring to some off-stage past, or some off-stage text and context, the scene refers to some unseen element that the stage is busily trying to recover or cover over. Thus in his *Theater as Problem* Benjamin Bennett calls drama an “ontologically defective genre” that is the result of an incongruous—but productive—marriage between literature and the institution of the stage. When the reader senses a defect in a non-dramatic text, it is a problem of the specific text, but

when I read a drama, when the dramatic text is (for me) an object of reading, part of my understanding of its quality as drama is the recognition that it *could be* (for me) something quite different, a kind of shadowy, inferred presence governing the action and speaking of ceremonially disguised figures in an open space before a restrainedly festive crowd of which I would be a

member. (Bennett 61)

This works both ways. The stage, too, must necessarily evoke some unrepresentable past. Since Ibsen, realistic drama tends to handle time through the technique of indirect exposition. Through it, the stage forges the present “dominated by an oppressive, looming past” (18). However, for all of the technique’s capacity, “[d]rama inevitably concerns itself less with long periods of time as such than with the past as an immediate presence in our mental and social life [...]” (18). This past that is present is, in other words, absence that is contained in the stage, which is always missing its manuscript.

From the first of Strindberg’s mature dramas, letters were found missing and circulating within a self-constitutive or intrapsychic circuit connecting self and other as soul murder. *The Father* (1886), written a year before the soul murder essay, traces the root cause of the cavalry captain Adolph’s psychotic breakdown to the infiltration into and disconnection of his communications. The central issue, the potential illegitimacy of the daughter, is, for Strindberg, a communication problem, as legitimacy is seen as a proper transmission of legacy. The primary means by which Laura destroys Adolph is the postal exchange, which she ably turns into a scene of peril. Strindberg shows the soul murderer Laura sitting at the relays, clandestinely introducing the feared missing places into the framework of reality and control Adolph builds up via his professional and scientific correspondence. Specifically, Laura intercepts all incoming publications that contain information about the latest discoveries in the field of astrophysics, frustrating Adolph in his research (*Selected Plays* 175). It should be noted also that Laura relies on a letter she intercepted years ago, in which Adolph expresses doubts about his sanity, for the legal authority to declare Adolph insane. In other words, having been taken out of its proper trajectory and context, the letter is turned against its spirit, and Adolph’s own words return from this unexpected detour as the seed of his mind’s disintegration.

Missing letters are also the driving force in Strindberg’s next and most famous play, *Miss Julie* (1888). But here, Strindberg elaborates on his theory of soul murder by introducing the themes of insurance and fire. The bat-



tle of the sexes in *Miss Julie* has its origin in the arson perpetrated in Miss Julie's childhood by her mother, an act whose motivation Strindberg fails or refuses to explain. The arson is damaging and contaminating, however, only to the extent that its effects were made uncontainable and irreversible when the mother sought to circumvent the institution of insurance. Only by seeing through the diversionary fireworks of the arson, one can discern the essence of the dead mother's malice. Not her arson, but her interception (of the letters that contained the fire insurance premium) was what caused the financial ruin of the house, and almost led the father to commit suicide, the soul murder that returns to fulfill its destiny in the daughter.

Insurance asserts that since every conceivable loss can be replaced by some monetary equivalent, insured loss is loss already admitted and covered. The standard of mourned death, however, implies and hides the contrary notion of an always uninsurable loss. The fantasy of seamless replacement prepares, by proxy or inoculation, for this very catastrophe, but this calculability of the risk of loss reduces the living to their mere exchange value, thus turning what was a risk of loss to a generalized certainty of loss. As Laurence Rickels points out, the emergence of the great insurance houses in the seventeenth century occurred concurrently with the similar emergence of early modernity's mass and massive failure to mourn. When modern insurance companies in the seventeenth century arose as a response to the emergence of the colonial trade that created the need for expanded marine insurance coverage, this introduction of the risk-management instrument reflected a similar shift in the risk-management that lay closer to home, exemplified, for instance, in the transformation of Lloyds of London from a coffee house into an insurance firm, enacting the instrument of insurance's overtaking of coffee's role as the drink of the melancholic. As Rickels notes:

Lloyd's of London accordingly holds the exemplary place of transit between conceptions of melancholia. From a humoral disorder which strikes selectively, either giving rise to genius in the one so inclined or incapacitating a certain physical type always predisposed to the illness, melancholia became the specter of unin-

surable loss which endangers even innocent bystanders. (65-66)

Strindberg was certainly familiar and familial with insurance, being a family member of one of Sweden's leading shipping houses.

After suffering a setback in his youthful dream of becoming a playwright and an actor, Strindberg was offered a commission to write a short story for an insurance concern, *Nordstjärnan* ("The North Star," Lagercrantz 46). Strindberg wrote a story about "young Mia who is visiting Stockholm and writing home to her fiancé Axel in the provinces" and recalls for their joint edification the cautionary anecdote about a maternal uncle who left behind a wife and six children without life insurance benefits. In stressing the capacity of insurance to prepare for catastrophe, the story pleased the insurance concern so much that it hired Strindberg as the editor of its insurance magazine, *Svenska Försäkrings-tidning* (Swedish Insurance Journal, Lagercrantz 46). But it did not take long before Strindberg again ran up against those missing places cycling back in the doubling technology of insurance. The magazine folded in six months, mainly because Strindberg turned the tables on the insurance concern and began "to question," as Lagercrantz reports,

the legitimacy of the entire business; marine insurance became his favorite target [...] Strindberg wrote in his magazine about British and German ship owners' disregard for their sailors' lives. He wrote that these magnates, in order to collect, had no scruples about arranging to rid themselves of a worn-out vessel, with total disregard for the crew's fate. (46)

Was this really so? Or was this but another expression of Strindberg's paranoia? Regardless, what comes through in this episode is not only Strindberg's fear of the persecuting power that lets a missive (be it a ship sent out bearing cargo) go missing, but also his wariness of accident insurance's sinister underside that endangers, rather than secures, one's cargo. Strindberg returned to this experience in *Red Room* (1879), the novel that launched Strindberg's career as a writer, where he devotes a chapter to exposing insurance as a conspiratorial scheme of the large insurance houses. To celebrate

the founding of Triton, a new marine insurance company, its founder gives a speech about the power of insurance:

The merchant sends out his ship, his steamer, his brig, his schooner, his bark, his yacht, or what you will. The storm breaks his—whatever it is—to pieces. Well? The merchant says, “go ahead!”. For the merchant loses nothing. That is the insurance company’s idea and ideal. (*Red Room* 117)

But through the eyes of the hero Arvid Falk, the insurance company’s boastful confidence before loss is exposed as applying only to the major shareholders (117). The major shareholders’ security is paid for by the missing cargoes of small investors, who always lose out when there are accidents.

In his works, Strindberg, the son of a shipping agency owner, lived out the struggle between the major shareholders and the small investors, i.e. between the shipping agent father’s injunctive to mourn completely, and the persistence of a loss his mother entrusted to him in passing, an illicit, uninsurable transfer to which he would give the resonant name of soul murder. In the autobiographical text *The Son of a Servant-Woman*, Strindberg lets the curtain drop on a primal scene of this transaction:

Now, while she was still able to get up, she began to mend the children’s linen and clothes, and to clean out all the drawers. She often talked to John about religion and other transcendental matters. One day she showed him some golden rings.

“You boys will get these when Mama is dead,” she said. “Which is mine?” asked John without stopping to think about death. She showed him a plaited girl’s ring with a heart on it. It made a deep impression on the boys, who had never owned anything made of gold, and he often thought of that ring. (96)

The passage raises several questions. Why “a plaited girl’s ring”? What does the mother give to the son in making her death the condition of this transfer? Who is the girl for whom the ring was originally destined?

The identity of the girl is just as hard for the reader to discern as it was for Strindberg. Strindberg was the third of twelve children, of whom only seven survived infan-

cy. Such family history is not unique, as child mortality was high even in the nineteenth century—although in Strindberg’s family, it seems to have been exceptionally so. Nor is it unique that none of the biographies mention these five dead infants. Our refusal to acknowledge the death of the child grows directly out of their vulnerable proximity to death. In commencing his exploration of the missing links of German letters, Rickels puts the focus on the eighteenth century invention of the child-pupil, whose “double but separate” status doubles via analogy and genealogy that of the dead in their mortuary palaces (22-23). This newly cemented ontological status, coupled with the still high rate of infant mortality (as seen in the five infant deaths in Strindberg’s family, for instance), created a massive occasion for mourning.

A phantom is, as Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok have shown, a traumatic loss buried within the body that, nevertheless, does not issue from an experience or a relationship that relates to the bearer of the crypt, not even as something repressed. Rather than being repressed, a phantom is an effect rather of encrypting. The unmourned loss of a child the parent buries in a surviving child’s body is an instance of a phantom taking up residence in a specific location inside the body. Since a phantom transmission must escape detection in order to preserve the buried corpus whole, a phantom transmission is, therefore, an unspeakable, secretive affair, which utterly counteracts attempts at libidinal introjection—that is, it severs the link of reference between words and some unconscious content (Abraham and Torok 171-72). Phantom words point, instead, to gaps in the introjective strivings of the ego, and to some catastrophe in the parent (174).

The ring passed on by his mother did not, for Strindberg, function as a symbol, but as the phantom gap described by Abraham and Torok, a place in his corpus where he could carry his mother’s melancholic incorporation of a lost daughter. In *The Son of a Servant*, the passing of his mother inspires in John only the fantasy of a girl mourning over her mother.

There was the only good thing that would come from the bottomless well of unhappiness: he would get the ring. He could see it on his hand now. “This is in memory of my mother,” he would be able to say, and he



would weep at the thought of her. But he could not stop thinking how fine it would look. (98)

The only consolation for the mother's passing is the ring that contains the mourning for the mother. But this mourning, like a girl's ring, appears to belong to the daughter, not to the son. John cannot stop thinking about how fine it would look on him. A girlish vanity is thus the limit of his mourning and the affirmation of a daughter's survival in him.

Although the name of Strindberg is associated primarily with the conjugal battle, the fact is the female figure that appears most persistently in Strindberg's works is not the wife, but the daughter. Strindberg's corpus is populated by figures like Miss Julie (*Miss Julie*), Queen Christina (*Queen Christina*), Agnes (*A Dream Play*), Eleanora (*Easter*), and Swanwhite (*Swanwhite*). Judith looms large, though off-stage, in *The Dance of Death I*, and takes center stage in *The Dance of Death II*. In fact, in both *Miss Julie* and *Facing Death*, Strindberg portrays a situation where the mother has left and only daughters remain.

Who was the daughter, then, whose un mournable loss Strindberg's mother passed down to him within a girl's ring? It is the name to be found entered in the Stockholm city archives. On record, two siblings, a girl and a boy, were born and died within the first three years of Strindberg's life, the first bearing the mother's name: Eleonora Elisabeth Strindberg, who lived from 5 May 1850 to 22 April 1851 (Stockholm Stadarkiv, *Död- och begravningskok 1748-1860 M-S*). She and the younger brother were the letters the mother had misplaced: a letter or two, a child or two. Late in his career, Strindberg was to memorialize this sister who died a few days before her first Easter (20 April) in *Easter*, where he gives the name Eleonora to the sister who returns from melancholic phantom burial.

In *The Father*, Strindberg staged the secret infiltration of this un mournable loss of a sibling or two unimpeded by accident-proofing (such as insurance). Adolph's scientific research is, in one sense, his attempt to regain control over ghosts, of translating specters into life. This is the gist of Adolph's discovery in his own words: "Yes, yes! I've been subjecting meteor stones to spectroscopy, and I've found carbon, in other words, vestiges of or-

ganic life!" (*Selected Plays* 155). By using the spectroscopy, Adolph seeks to create a circuit where life and live messages will not get dropped along the way and become specters. However, the fragility of Adolph's false sense of control over specters is highlighted by the out of control loss that hits too close to home, which *The Father* can only name by proxy via the daughter Bertha's fears. As Bertha tells her father, a ghost dwells in the attic, mourning the survivors: "Such a moaning, mournful song, the most mournful song I've ever heard. And it sounded like it came from the storage room up in the attic, where the cradle is, you know, the room to the left" (169-70). This dead child, whose missing place was nevertheless represented by the empty cradle, is the source of Adolph's obsessive fear over the uncertainty of paternity. The fear that the child may not be his child analogizes the empty place dedicated to the child that no longer is.

However, although *The Father* and the essay on soul murder represent Strindberg at his most desperate, hovering between the futile attempts to gain control over the circulation of letters and succumbing to it in utter disintegration, Strindberg was slowly, painfully, building the communication apparatus that would give the vacuum some saving context at last. This he accomplished in part through his interest in technologies of live transmission that correspond to his role as the transmitter of life or undeath, as can be seen in *The Dance of Death*, a play that restages *The Father* in an attempt to find a solution to the problem of uninsurable messages left unresolved in *The Father*.

*The Dance of Death* takes place in a former prison on an island, now turned into the living quarters of Edgar, an artillery captain. Isolated from the mainland, Edgar and his wife Alice wage the seemingly eternal battle of the sexes, a manic attempt to obscure the vestigial evidence of un mourned death. But in this play, too, the center is missing. Just as the dead child dwells in the gap opened up as the question of paternity in *The Father*, so here, too, two dead children are mentioned in passing, casually dropped—the names dropped.

Kurt. Does he [Edgar] dance?

Alice. Yes, he's really very funny sometimes.

Kurt. One thing . . . forgive me for asking. Where are

the children?

Alice. Maybe you don't know that two of them died?

Kurt. You've been through that too?

Alice. What haven't I been through?

Kurt. But the other two? (*Miss Julie and Other Plays* 133)

However, in *The Dance of Death*, Strindberg averts the soul murder that the vacuum of the missing child (or two) typically packs away but then releases. Instead, Strindberg prepares a place for the missing children in the telegraphic apparatus, through which Edgar gets in touch with the surviving pair of children who, though they live on the mainland, analogize the dead pair by their absence. For this reason, it is crucial that Strindberg stages the telegraph not as a writing or printing medium, but as an audio medium. By focusing on the telegraph's ability to send its signals audibly to those in-the-know, Strindberg figures the telegraph as a live transmission medium, as a telephone for the in-group. Thus when Kurt asks Edgar why he does not use the telephone, Edgar gives him an answer that identifies the telegraph as the better telephone. The telephone, Edgar replies, exposes the message, its live transmission, to possibilities of infiltration ("the operators repeat everything we say" 130). Some loose-lipped operator could be listening in on the exchange, consigning the telephone to indiscretion and betrayal. As a result, the telegraph must fill in for the unreliable telephone as the medium that is more capable of receiving and containing the uninsurable ring.

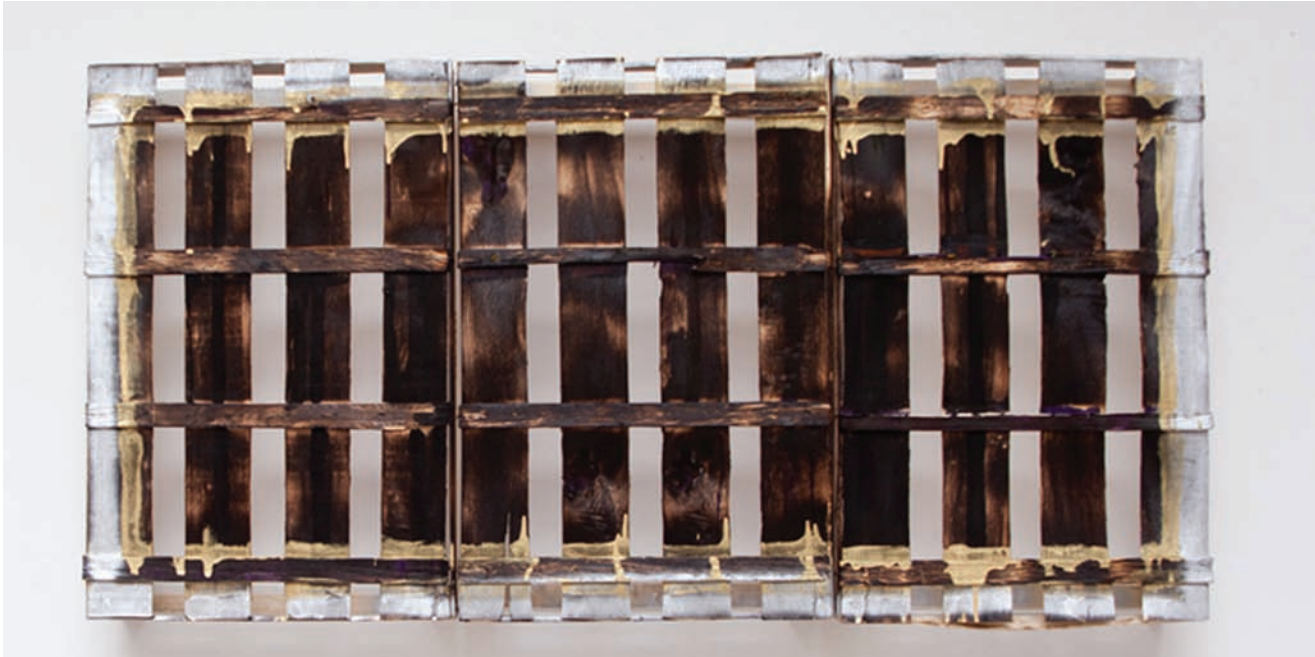
These apparatuses that straddle the divide between presence and absence provided the imaginative space within which Strindberg could restore the missing letters to relationality. As Strindberg emphasizes, the telegraph is a dwelling-place of specters. This the telegraph reveals in one seemingly harmless, and yet ominous, stage direction, which interrupts the small talk between Kurt and Edgar: "The telegraph begins tapping" (*Miss Julie and Other Plays* 130). Strindberg makes sure this seemingly pointless stage direction is given its full due. As Edgar explains to Kurt, the telegraph cannot be turned off. The telegraph always stays on, always in the ready position to receive, thereby opening the here and now to some other place. In other words, technical media can

mirror and double the radical exteriority incorporated within the body as a phantom, and serve as projection or endopsychic scan of its internal yet foreign topography.

What this scan reveals is the missing letter that was circulating in transit. In a remarkable pantomime that takes place in the middle of *The Dance of Death*, as Edgar is burning the love letters he had sent to Alice, the stage instruction notes that, suddenly, the telegraph gives a single click, upon which Edgar clutches at his heart in pain (164). Whereas in *The Father*, the spectroscopist's desire to dominate the specter resulted only in Adolph's obliviousness to Laura's control of specters via the post, in *The Dance of Death*, Strindberg could imagine the ghost, passed down as a ring, giving him a ring through Edgar's telegraph. Here, the medium is the message, to the extent that the "is" prepares the interval whereby the non-being of the message can be contemplated. Even as the click sends electricity into Edgar's heart, threatening to annihilate him, the click also opens Edgar up to the possibility of the ghost's missing-in-transit existence. A single tap in Morse code is the letter E. The telegraph reroutes the letter that had gone missing and begins to spell out the forbidden name of the sister.

Even after finding the missing letters and recognizing that they can exist only as missing, the melancholic must deal with the fragility of the encrypted ghost, now imperiled by the exposure to the outside. Of the two plays that started Strindberg's career, *The Father* had dealt with the threat of self-destructive doubling (with the spectroscopist). In *Miss Julie*, Strindberg addressed the perils of the crypt's exposure. As the final passage shows, Miss Julie's suicide and Jean's anxieties are both reactions and a solution to the threat of exposure.

JEAN. Don't think, don't think! You're taking all my strength away too, and making me a coward—What's that? I thought the bell moved!—No! Shall we stop it with paper?—To be so afraid of a bell!—Yes, but it's not just a bell—there's somebody behind it—a hand sets it in motion—and something else sets that hand in motion—but if you stop your ears—just stop your ears! Yes, but then he'll go on ringing even louder—



and keep on ringing until someone answers—and then it's too late! Then the police will come—and then...

*Two loud rings on the bell.*

JEAN [cringes, then straightens himself up.] It's horrible! But there's no other way!—Go!

[MISS JULIE walks resolutely out through the door

Curtain.] (*Selected Plays* 267)

Two loud rings, a manuscript or two—and the only way to stop the exhumation of these shallow graves is for Miss Julie to go and entrust Jean with the task of keeping her alive some other way. Jean must survive, in order to preserve Miss Julie from exposure. In the preface to *Miss Julie*, Strindberg explains, “[h]ence the servant Jean lives on; but not Miss Julie, who cannot live without honor” (210).

In the preface Strindberg made explicit the connections between Jean's destiny as the survivor and that of the writer, thus affirming in Jean, the French version of Strindberg's first name, Johan, his own destiny as the carrier of the sister's ring. The dramatist's task, as Strindberg notes in ending the preface, is to survive, and to wait for some future theater that will not allow the message to be dropped in the passage between the stage and the audience, a theater that Strindberg theorizes in detail in the preface. Notably, every aspect of Strind-

berg's theory of this intimate stage is geared expressly toward conservation, such as doing away with intermissions or removing from the theater all sources of distraction (213). But this stage exists in the future, and for now, the dramatist must preserve these manuscripts safely in a drawer (217). The writer's task is continuity, survival—as Strindberg stresses, even if he should fail, there will always be time for more attempts (217).

Even though Strindberg was to realize his theory in the *Intima Teater*, he would not use it as the idealized telecommunication medium he had called for in the preface that would insure his transmissions. Strindberg had discovered an alternative means for preserving his messages from exposure. This alternative means was fire, which figures as an important metaphor for Strindberg, when in 1875 he observes in a letter to Siri von Essen that the essence of his talent lay in fire:

—you believe that genius consists of a good, sharp head—not so—my head is not one of the sharpest—but the fire; my fire is the greatest in Sweden, and if you want me to, I'll set fire to the entire miserable whole! (*Lagercrantz* 63)

But for young Strindberg, fire stood for destruction. Later, Strindberg would retool the metaphor of fire as an instrument of conservation. Just as he sought in *The Dance of Death* to remedy the destructive effects

of *The Father*, Strindberg kept returning to the burned site of uninsured loss in *Miss Julie*, rereading and remediating the destructive fire as preserving fire. Three of four chamber plays of 1907 deal with arson: *The Ghost Sonata* takes place immediately after the hero risked his life, putting out a fire set by arson; in *The Burned House*, the *Miss Julie* plot of the misplaced insurance premium plays itself out exactly as before; in *The Pelican*, the son sets fire to the house to protest the mother's abusive neglect of her children. *The Great Highway* (1909) reaches its climax when the Hunter cremates the Japanese, per his request, after he commits ritual suicide—both figures being projections of the author in the Expressionist fashion. *A Dream Play* (1900) ends in a purifying flame, which assumes the shape of a giant telephone tower.

In his *Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Gaston Bachelard cites an early story by George Sand in which burning oneself is presented as the means of preserving the self and its relations against the threat of death.

In the heart of fire, death is no longer death. “Death could not exist in that ethereal region to which you are carrying me [...]. My fragile body may be consumed by the fire, my soul must be united with those tenuous elements of which you are composed.’ ‘Very well!’ said the Spirit, casting over the Dreamer part of his red mantle, ‘Say farewell to the life of men and follow me into the life of phantoms.’” (18)

Cremation replaces the fragile, decaying body with a virtual, ethereal corpse in the space left by the burnt body (Rickels 219). Our word “image” comes from the Latin *imago*, meaning ultimately from the ancient Roman practice of casting death masks (*imagines*), which were then prominently displayed in the atrium. In tracing the outline of the face, the *imago* preserves the corpse as vessel of the empty space dedicated to the undying portion that does not decay. This is what Maria Torok calls the exquisite corpse. As she explains, “the imago, along with its external embodiment in the object, was set up as the repository of hope; the desires it forbade would be realized one day. Meanwhile, the *imago* retains the valuable thing whose lack cripples the ego” (116).

The 1892 one act play, *Facing Death*, repeats the Miss

Julie story but attempts to lessen the impact of the misplaced insurance premium. In the play, Durand, a widower who oversees a run-down boarding house and tries to keep an eye on his unmarried daughters, will lose his final customer, and, rather than see his house go to ruin and his daughters let loose as prostitutes, Durand commits suicide (*själv mord*), but not before planning an arson (*mordbrand*) that will be his legacy and gift to the daughters. In this piece, which is set up right away as a play about collecting on insurance (Durand and his daughter mention it in their first conversation), the essential redress is contained in the distinction Strindberg draws between life and fire insurance.

(Durand) I want you to ask me this first: “Do you have life insurance?” Well-I!

ADELE (uncertain, curious): “Do you have life insurance?”

DURAND: No, I did have a policy, but I sold it a long time ago because I thought I noticed someone was impatient about collecting on it. But I do have fire insurance! (*From the Cynical Life* 113)

It is not life insurance that will help Durand protect Adele even after his death. It is fire insurance that will play that role.

ADELE: It's burning! It's burning! Father—What's wrong? You'll be burned alive!

(DURAND raises his head and pushes the glass aside with a gesture full of meaning.)

ADELE: You have ... swallowed ... poison!

DURAND (nods in agreement): Do you have the fire insurance policy? Tell Therese ... and Annette ... (He puts his head down again. The bell tolls once more—noise and commotion offstage.) (116)

The absence of life insurance does not make the suicide pointless, for the point of Durand's death is not to circumvent death by insuring life. It is fire, wherein his decaying body will be divorced from the *imago* and cease to interfere with his function as keeper of the crypt.

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Image Notes

p.7 Das Loch p.9 Fenster p.10 Untitled (detail)  
p.12 Untitled p.17 Brandobjekt

## OVER YOUR DEAD MOTHER: RUMORS AND SECRETS IN STIFTER'S "TOURMALINE"

AUTHOR • NICOLA BEHRMANN  
ARTIST • ANDERS DICKSON

Despite his confidence that he could create a simple and lucid masterpiece of descriptive narration, Adalbert Stifter's "Tourmaline" turned out to be the most obscure and complex tale in his story-collection *Many-Colored Stones* (1852). This essay traces the cryptological drive undermining the coherence and closure the realist narrator attempts to provide. Stifter's abundant description of seemingly superfluous details, the numerous narrative gaps and various rumors confuse any sufficient account of what really happened. The breaks and leaks in story-telling can be understood as indices leading to a submerged work of mourning. The pedagogical intention organizing Stifter's meticulous story-telling not only in this story turns upon itself through the incessant supply of these commemorative indices or fragments. Not only is such pedagogy unable to find an efficient narrative mode, it also consistently undermines the authority whereby the instructor-narrator might come to terms with his own tale.

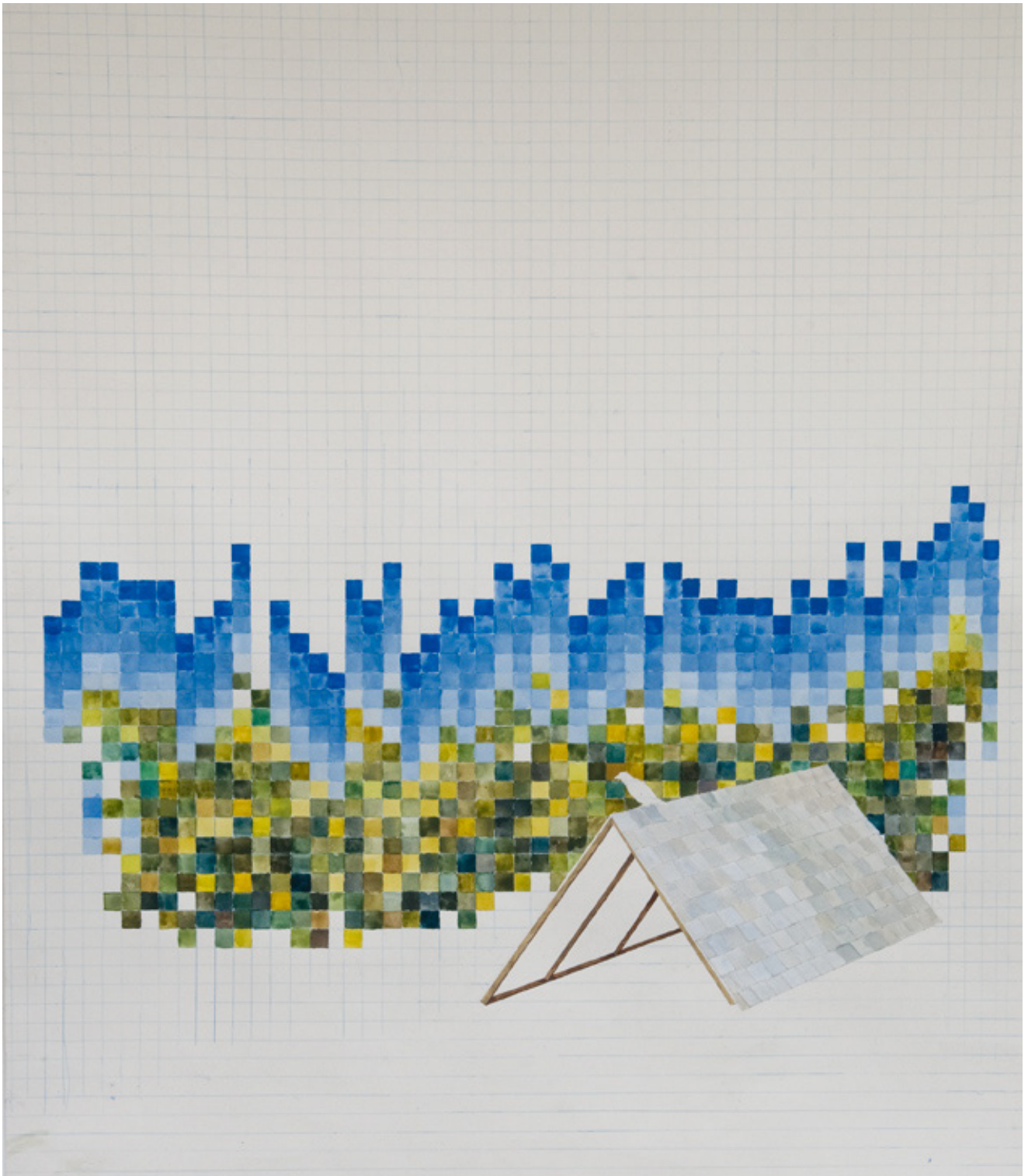
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Anders Dickson transferred in 2008 from the Wisconsin university system to the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, class of Daniel Roth. He is working to establish a system of symbols like a language in which to examine and share his views.

Malgré sa confiance de pouvoir créer un chef-d'œuvre descriptif simple et clair, Adalbert Stifter fait de son œuvre *Tourmaline* le plus obscur et le plus complexe conte de la collection *Roches multicolores* de 1852. Cet article suit la trace du dynamisme cryptographique qui sape la cohérence, ainsi que la possibilité d'une fin fermée que l'auteur réaliste essaye de fournir. La description abondante des détails apparemment superflus, les nombreuses lacunes narratives, ainsi que les différentes rumeurs compliquent le compte-rendu du vrai incident. On peut expliquer les interruptions et les fuites dans le conte comme des indices de la présence cachée du travail de deuil. L'intention pédagogique qui dirige la façon selon laquelle Stifter raconte une histoire se retourne contre lui à travers l'apport incessant des signes commémoratifs ou des fragments commémoratifs. Non seulement ce type de pédagogie ne peut pas trouver un mode narratif efficace, mais il sape aussi la capacité de l'instructeur-narrateur d'arriver en accord avec son propre conte.

Nicola Behrmann obtient un doctorat de l'Université de New York en 2010. Elle est maître de conférences en allemand à l'Université Rutgers. Ses recherches incluent des thèmes comme la théorie littéraire, les études sur le genre, l'avant-garde, le réalisme allemand et la littérature de l'exil. Actuellement, elle est en train de réviser les œuvres complètes de l'expressionniste Emmy Hennings, écrivaine et poète. Elle publie aussi sur Hugo Ball, Walter Benjamin, Berthold Brecht, Franz Kafka et Frank Wedekind.

En 2008, Anders Dickson passe de l'Université du Wisconsin à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe sous la direction de Daniel Roth. Son travail actuel consiste à formuler un système de symboles, comme un langage, pour pouvoir s'exprimer et partager ses perspectives.



## DISAPPEARANCE

In 1852, every evening between five and nine after official hours, school principal Adalbert Stifter assiduously worked on the compilation of his story collection *Bunte Steine* (*Many-Colored Stones*). Although almost every story he prepared had been previously published and only needed to be transcribed, Stifter found himself caught in a revision compulsion. Unable to complete more than three pages in clean copy a day, he continued to beg his publisher Gustav Heckenast to allow him time for more thorough revisions.<sup>1</sup> He advised Heckenast to recognize the improvements he had already made as invaluable, and think of Goethe's *Iphigenie*, which the master had transcribed five times.<sup>2</sup> Reluctantly, he submitted "Katzensilber" ("Muscovite") and "Bergkristall" ("Rock Crystal"), and by the end of July, when he began with the revisions of "Der Pfortner im Herrenhause," now published under the title "Tourmaline," Stifter complained again that all he needed was time in order to turn this story into a "simple, lucid, and intimate masterpiece."<sup>3</sup> However, "Tourmaline" not only became the "darkest" and most obscure piece in Stifter's petrified tales—a sort of *hapax legomena* that can only cumbrously be called back into its order—it also lacks the very transparency, lucidity, and smoothness he tried to achieve in his meticulous rendering and rasping. We are not being asked to read this text, but to read *in* it, "as in a letter bearing sad news" (Stifter 1986). What kind of letter does this story contain? What message is enclosed in the letter? To whom is it directed?

One of the intended addressees of *Bunte Steine* was Stifter's foster daughter Juliane Mohaupt, the so-called "wild child," who received a copy of *Bunte Steine* on her twelfth birthday. The dedication, which reiterates fatherly advice given to her in the recent past, indicates that the book should be interpreted as a didactic message.<sup>4</sup> Stifter understood the transmission of the paternal lesson implicated in his stories as immaculate inception, which shifted from orality to textuality and is constituted as a *commemorative* letter Juliane was supposed to remember whenever she tried to escape the "good." The obscure pedagogy that is *en route* in "Tourmaline," however, appears to have lost its frame or hold. Dressed up as a letter of mourning, the course of the story is sup-

ported by transferential circuits of delivery and return, a coded and encrypted message that, nevertheless, centers on pedagogy:

[It is about a man who] *no longer understands life, when he abandons that inner law which is his steadfast guide along the right path, when he surrenders utterly to the intensity of his joys and sorrows, loses his foothold, and is lost in regions of experience which for the rest of us are almost wholly shrouded by mystery.* (128; emphasis mine)

What exactly could children learn from a moral lesson that concerns a proper understanding of things and at the same time cannot be unraveled? What is the relation between the moral lesson, Stifter's striving for transparency and lucidity, and the obscurity and inaccessibility this tale, nevertheless, unfolds?

According to many of his critics, Stifter got lost in the meticulous and seemingly superfluous description of objects and furniture in "Tourmaline."<sup>5</sup> His first biographer Alois Raimund Hein found that the story lacked consequence, poetic justice, and complete closure (322).<sup>6</sup> Walter Benjamin diagnosed a strange *Verschwiegenheit* (muteness) under the surface of abundant description and called the speech of Stifter's characters an "exposition of feelings and thoughts in an acoustically insulated space" (112). Stifter himself once stated that he experienced any lack of description as painful and was immensely concerned with the filling, if not the fulfillment, of narrative gaps and voids, remainders of his *Beschreibungswut* (description mania) which had been left unattended.<sup>7</sup> Although the narrator opens up the apartment of the pensioner or *Rentherr* in Vienna and provides a meticulous description of its interior, we do not gain access into the protagonists' inner turmoil or moral conflicts. The *Rentherr's* study, in which he engages in painting, crafting, playing music, collecting, archiving, writing, and reading, is curiously covered with his private collection of poster portraits of that he terms "famous men," together with a number of ladders and armchairs on wheels that allow an intimate viewing of each of the portraits. This odd collection turns the privacy and seclusion of this room into an *epigone's* mirror space for narcissistic fantasies. The nonsense category



of “famous men” inevitably induces an endless collecting of portraits that transgresses the spatial limits of a private apartment.

The private room of the *Rentherr*'s wife that centers on a painting of the Virgin and Child receives equal descriptive energy. Framed by a curtain, and again framed by the sculpture of an angel holding the curtain the image unfolds a *mise en abyme* structure of pure femininity. The wife appears to be completely immersed in the description of the rooms she inhabits, subsumed by the overbearing image of the Virgin. What is the intention of this detailed account? Instead of delivering the key to the *Rentherr*'s psyche via description of his environment, Stifter actually locks us out from any further insight or conclusion. At no point does the narrator indicate that he has knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the characters. Not even the proper name and background of his main protagonist are disclosed, but only subject to rumors:

This man was known in the house as *der Rentherr*, but hardly anyone could say whether he was so called because he lived on a pension or because he was employed in a revenue office. The latter, however, could not be the case, because if so he would have had to go to his office at fixed times, whereas he was at home at all hours and often for whole days on end, working at the various tasks he had set himself. [...] It was clear then that he must have a small private income enabling him to lead this kind of life. (107)

The meticulous description of the apartment only adds to the secrecy and muteness of the events that are narrated all too hastily. A close friend, the brilliant actor Dall tears the order of the intimate household apart: “Dall began a love affair with his friend's wife and continued it for a while. In her anxiety the wife herself finally told her husband what had happened” (112). After she has been all too quickly forgiven and the old order all too quickly restored, the wife disappears: “Then, one day, the wife of the *Rentherr* disappeared. She had gone out as she usually did, and had not come back” (113). The narrator never discloses, motivates, or explains the reasons for her disappearance, or to where she has fled:” [N]ot a single report was received



of the [...] wife, not a soul had heard a word of her since the day of her disappearance, nor indeed has she ever returned” (146).

According to Liliane Weissberg, the course of Stifter's storytelling is less determined by the protagonists than by the objects they leave behind (264). In “Tourmaline,” however, these objects seem to lose their owners who disappear, go away, and leave them behind as dead things. Having convinced himself that his wife will never return, the *Rentherr* also abandons the apartment and departs together with his child, the heir to this crypt. When police and civil servants break up his abandoned flat, they find that “under a veil of dust” all the previously described things “lay in mourning” (117). In the wake of extensive description, the things in “Tourmaline” are no longer related to each other or to the persons they belong to and can only be put back in order through the intervention of the bureaucracy, the police, and the law. Perhaps nowhere more pressing and urgent as in this story does Stifter's description of things entail the catastrophic secret that threatens to disrupt the nar-

rative, and that secret must remain silenced and mute at all costs.

### RUMOROLOGY

The *fort* of the mother and wife creates a traumatic blank in the story, which is never sufficiently disclosed, motivated, and explained. Neither protagonists, nor narrators trace the actual *Bahnungen* or *Erinnerungsspuren*—the tracks or memory traces—that might have led to her disappearance. Since the course or case of the m/Other has no fate, neither destiny nor destination, the narrators are merely tracing a continuous and obsessive series of displacements. After the sudden and inexplicable withdrawal of every character who had just been introduced, the narration breaks into two distinct parts, the inner connection between which remains obscure and in which events are being told—a connection that lacks coherence and closure. What started out as a causal and linear narrative collapses into a collection of fragmentary reports:

At one time a rumor circulated that the *Rentherr* was living somewhere in the Bohemian Forest in a cave where he kept the child hidden, going out by day to earn a living and returning to the cave in the evening. But then other things happened in the city, for events follow hard upon each other in such places, and there were other novelties to talk about, and before long the *Rentherr* and his story were forgotten. (117-18)

As if exhausted by the disseminated rumors that can be neither verified nor dismissed, the first narrator hands the rest of the narration over to a second, female narrator, “a friend,” a kind and warm-hearted housewife from the suburbs who lives much closer to the events told: “We shall now let her describe the sequel in her own words” (118). The unusual introduction of another narrator who supposedly “solves” the case marks a caesura in the text otherwise hosting rumor and secrets: instead of a framing narrative we have a doubling of the narrative.

In this moment of transference from one narrator to the other, the text seems to send signals about its inherent constitution, revealing that it is unable to fulfill the task of narration, to create coherence (*Zusammenhang*). In-

stead, everything we learn about the characters seems to have its source in rumor and hearsay, in riddles and uncertainties that perpetually circulate, all of which bear no origin and no specific destination and thus traverse and contaminate the “realist” fiction. Such obscurity concerns even the very constitution of the text, which is—unlike the majority of Stifter’s stories—based on real events (or rather: actual rumors) imparted by Stifter’s friend Antonie von Arneth on whom the second, female first person narrator is based.<sup>8</sup> Although von Arneth’s original letter is not preserved, her story must have concerned her former mentor, Joseph Lange (1751-1831), a renowned actor, composer, and the painter of Mozart’s portrait, who appears in “Tourmaline” as the “brilliant actor” Dall.<sup>9</sup> As though sustaining a secret kernel, out of which storytelling itself emerges, the rumors in “Tourmaline” appear as counter-text that discreetly enters the realist narrative and is—more or less successfully—controlled by a (split) auctorial narrator. Rumors are determined by repetition: “What I learn through rumor,” Blanchot writes in *The Infinite Conversation*, “requires no author, no guarantee or verification. Rumor is [...] a pure relation of no one and nothing” (19-20). Rumors purport the claim to being true—*perhaps* true—but without foundation and in an ambiguous relation to what we call “reality” and “truth.” Disturbing the general order of things, whose stability they at the same time wish to enforce, rumors enter storytelling as encrypted and fragmented pieces of information, as ghostly half-truths, and appear to boycott the project of mimetic representation, in particular poetic realism’s quest for moderation and transfiguration. Since rumors’ sources are indefinite, absolute, and fictive, they contain a rhizomatic force that can subvert, transgress, and tear down the house of representation.

### CRYPTOLOGY

The course of the story now breaks into a series of time lapses, rumorous passages, and *Merkmale* (features or marks) that repeatedly force us to start anew, whenever another indication or a new mark (*neues Merkmal*) occurs that seems to be able to create coherence: “A long time had passed since this incident, and I had quite forgotten about it” (120)—“After this incident a consider-



able period again elapsed” (122)—“An appreciable time had again elapsed since this incident, when something else of significance took place” (128). The time passing between the *Merkmale* constitutes a space of forgetting and repressing, when things are happening we do not want to see or cannot see. To fill the interstices of the narrative, to master uncertainty and irresolution of the hermeneutically obscure passages, and at the same time, to preserve the inviolable silence at the core of this tale will now become the task of the narrator: How to re-integrate those incessantly described belongings of the *Reitherr* as cryptonyms, how to recall them, how to put them into a coherent order when they start to get out of control, and, finally, how to transfer them to their *Nachkommenschaften* (descendants)?

Marred by uncertainties and rumors, by turns and de-

tours, and by a storytelling that only makes its way through the text by a series of *Merkmale* and narrative gaps, “Tourmaline” develops “with great address” a textual movement that actually repents any disclosure of the secrets by which it is mobilized. Derrida has emphasized the great address (*große Geschick*) with which Freud’s grandson Ernst was throwing a wooden spool away and dragging it back in order to compensate for his mother’s absence. Enacting both the traumatic experience and the triumphant mastery of a disappearing mother, Ernst managed to invent a game in which the pleasure principle and a repetition compulsion could conjoin and work together.<sup>10</sup> As Derrida has further pointed out in *The Post Card*, the famous *Fort-Da* game not only generates a certain rhythm that postpones, sets aside, and defers what might put the pleasure principle in question, but the game also determines Freud’s own

textual movement in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," his *Zauderrhythmus* (a rhythm of hesitation), which he "observes every time that something does not suffice, that something must be put off until further on, until later. Then he makes the hypothesis of the beyond *revenir* (come back) only to dismiss it again" (Derrida, *Post Card* 295). Writing as a way to involve the vanished or withdrawn love object into a game of absence and presence is enacted over and over again in Stifter's texts: *Studien* (*Studies*), *Bunte Steine* (*Many-Coloured Stones*), and *Spielereien für junge Herzen* (*Little Games for Young Hearts*). In the only incident in his brief autobiographical fragment *Mein Leben* (*My Life*), both Stifter's mother and grandmother threaten the withdrawal of their affection after the son breaks a windowpane. The terrified son linguistically miraculates up the small and marginal details of a traumatic close-up: *Mutter, da wächst ein Kornhalm.*<sup>11</sup>

#### RABENMUTTER<sup>12</sup>

In her detective-like persistence to trace the secret kernel of the rumors and *Merkmale*, the second narrator discovers the *Rentherr* as gatekeeper in a slowly decaying manor house, which in contrast to other houses in the city, preserves all its memory traces as it was never renovated, torn down, or rebuilt. The *Rentherr* has become the *Pförtner* (gatekeeper) of his daughter, whom he has sealed off in a cryptic safe, a fort, where he dictates to her a writing program of aberrant mourning dedicated to the mother. Some of the numerous things that the first narrator established in his meticulous description of the *Rentherr's* apartment reappear deformed and displaced in the description of the sparse subterranean apartment. The iron grille that had closed off the *Rentherr's* apartment in Vienna comes back as the "strong iron bars [...] covered with dry scattered dirt from the street" (123) in front of the windows of the basement apartment he now inhabits; one of his two flutes is found in the subterranean apartment; the armchair and the rolling step ladders reappear as a white unlacquered chair and a wooden ladder—off of which the father eventually falls and dies. The gilded angel (at the bed of the child) turns into a black bird, the daughter's protector. All these things return, but in a disfigured and distorted



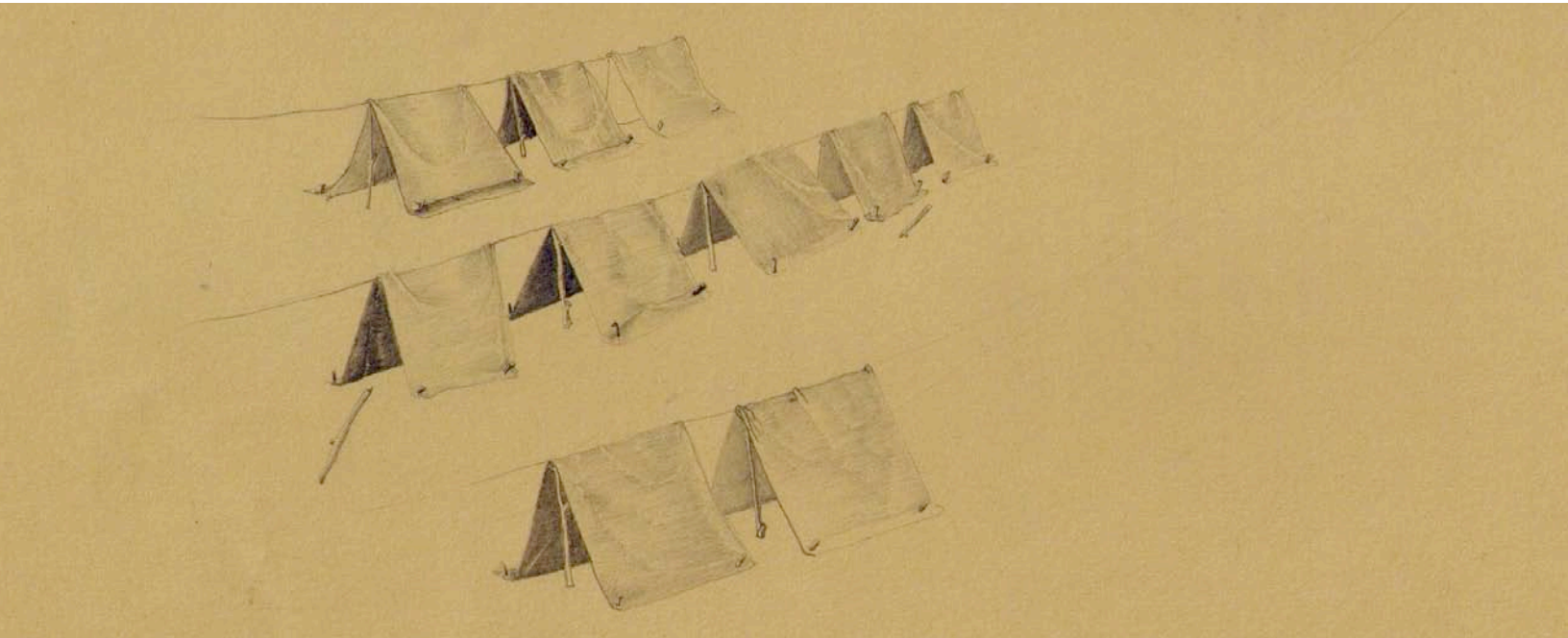
way, empty and impoverished. Stifter's things, which in the beginning are embedded in the peculiar and precise description of interior spaces and furnishings, turn into *Merkmale*, marks or indices, and congeal in the end into commemorative monuments, memorials and graves (*Denkmale*, *Grabmale*), from which one can learn. Only what is legible and does not resist description can be overcome. Each of the described *Merkmale*—the iron grille, the poster portraits of famous men, the child's bed with the guardian angel, the flute, the raven, and the big head of the girl—appear as indices that refuse to give account of a causal coherence and, instead, function as “hieroglyphs of the uncanny,”<sup>13</sup> as cryptonymic word-things containing a secret script. What the “sad letter” then communicates is a disclosed, veiled account of the inheritance of a crypt, the crypt as legacy of a traumatic neurosis.

The *word-things* resist full disclosure while giving a signal that they resist narration, as it is not yet decided what they actually mean. The notion of a cryptonymy, as elaborated by Maria Torok and Nicolas Abraham in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word*, is a “false or artificial unconscious” settling in the unconscious and following the process of incorporation of the lost beloved object.<sup>14</sup> The crypt is a *fort* [F-O-R-T] in the unconscious, or a safe, “a secret place, in order to keep itself safe somewhere in a self.”<sup>15</sup> The crypt forms “the vault of a desire” (Derrida, “Fors” xvii), and erects a tomb or monument for the lost object. The crypt does not commemorate the lost object itself, but its exclusion, the exclusion of a specific desire from the introjection process of a “healthy mourning.” The subject “knows” that the beloved object is “fort,” but does not accept this, and does not master or overcome the experience of loss in the sense of remembering, repetition, and working through: “The topography of the crypt,” Derrida points out, “follows the line of a fracture that goes from this no-place, or this beyond place, toward the other place; the place where the ‘pleasure's death’ still silently marks the singular pleasure: safe” (Derrida, “Fors” xxi).

However, a crypt's partitions are never completely sealed; there is permeation from within or from without, passing from one part of the divided self to the

other (Derrida, “Fors” xv). The *Rentherr's* nightly flute play which can be heard in the neighborhood, the girl's disturbing big head which attracts the attention of every-one who sees her, and the girl's raven apparently exiting and entering the basement apartment through the *kotig* (filthy) window, can be considered as actual effects of the crypt that demonstrate such a permeation. Even the unstable attribution of either *Rabe* (raven) or *Doble* (jackdaw) to the pitch-black bird underscores the creature as one of the most preeminent ciphers of the crypt-nest in “Tourmaline.” The black bird, which is first discovered by Alfred, the son of the female narrator, not only provides an essential *Merkmal* that leads to the disclosure of the *Rentherr's* existence, but the bird also appears as dangerous cryptonym that must not be touched. When Alfred tries to touch the black bird, he is terrified by the scream of the girl in the subterranean dwelling and then by her monstrous appearance.<sup>16</sup> The daughter seems to master the absence of her mother perfectly, as she cannot remember anything of her past and tells the female narrator “only things concerning the basement room” (158). But she appears as severely threatened when she sees the encrypted mother as *Rabel Doble* about to be taken away by another.

In both versions of “Tourmaline,” the bird is at first described as a raven and then corrected (removed and covered up) as jackdaw: “On a screen in front of another bed which I took to be the daughter's was the *Doble*, jackdaw—the bird which Alfred had tried to catch had not been a raven at all” (150). This shift from *Rabe* to *Doble* explicated by the virtuous female narrator and caretaker can be anagrammatically read as a transformation from *Rabenmutter* into a *holde Mutter* (a fair mother), thus enacting the subordination of the former under the law of a gentle mother whose position is being taken up by the second narrator herself. The raven holds the place of the dead/absent mother who has abandoned husband and child. Evoking a *Rabenmutter*, the word “raven” points to the ambivalence in which this mother is perceived. The ambivalence of *Rabel/Doble* works as a cipher in the text, referring to the circumstances in which a particular desire was barred from introjection and turned into incorporation, which is always secret and cryptic. Unlike the splitting



between a good, but usually dead, mother and an evil stepmother (common in fairy tales), Stifter takes great pain to preserve both dead mother and foster mother as “good” and thus, to prevent contradictory feelings. The *Rabenmutter*, who vanished without a trace, is without a destiny or desire of her own. Her empty place, as that of the *holde Mutter*, is represented by the female caretaker who also takes charge of the course of the narrative. Such replacement is closer to displacement and does not admit or preserve the memory of the actual mother as good or bad.

The cryptonym *Rabe/Dohle* is not the only word-thing the daughter inherits. Whenever he is absent, she erects as per her father’s instructions, a commemorative monument. The father has introduced an internal postal system of dead letters that have no addressee and circulate exclusively in the subterranean apartment. Trapped in her father’s repetition compulsion, she must repeat the traumatic instant. “Whenever I asked him what I should do when he was away,” the daughter tells the female narrator, he would say:

“Describe the moment when I lie dead upon the bier and they bury me.” Then, whenever I said: “Father, I have done that so many times,” he would reply: “Then describe how your mother is wandering through the world with a broken heart, how she is afraid to come back and, in despair, takes her own life.” And whenever I said, “Father, I have done that so many times,” he would reply: “Then describe it again.” (158)

It is the father who dictates to his child his own letters, which he alone will receive. Asked where she kept the homework assignments, the girl “replied her father had saved them and that they had been put aside somewhere” (158). While any other inheritance of the girl has to be considered as lost—not the tiniest scrap of paper remains to document her descent—the father keeps the daughter’s assigned notes delivering sad news. Together with the cryptonym *Rabe/Dohle* the letters will constitute the daughter’s only inheritance. The *père-version* of her father’s daily writing task, sending off hidden messages in a text, as incessant transference of a secret that manifested itself as mere “rumors” on a textual

level—the disappearance of wife/mother that marks the silenced quilting point of the story and its collapse.

As a temporal loop, the writing task falls into a repetition compulsion that cannot be resolved by “story-telling.” The loss of wife/mother is always too close to be buried, mourned, and forgotten. Writing fights forgetting as much as forgetting haunts it. Once it is written down, an event can be transferred to the next generation. His “dictations” are only exercised during the absence—the *fort*—of the father. The letter writing that constitutes “Tourmaline” might even be another spool or reel for mastering absence. The daughter does not “know” what she describes, for she has learned and developed a language without referentiality. She only repeats, trained in repetition compulsion, which bears *Worthörigkeit* (obedience to the word) without possible reference. She has no understanding of death, loss, and mourning, just as the father was “unable to understand things” (128). In this light, the daughter is indeed buried alive by a dead past and a dead future inside the subterranean paternal crypt. She appears to understand that her father is dead, but when the friendly caretaker/virtuous narrator adds that he has been interred in the earth as is the custom with the dead and where he shall remain, she bursts into tears (160). She was well acquainted with death, but only as something that time and again could be reanimated. In her world, only the dead are alive. Dwelling in the timeless space of melancholic incarceration, the (abjected) daughter is equally present and absent, *fort* and *da*—saved and buried alive.<sup>17</sup> She does not know the difference between signifiers and the signified; she believes whatever one tells her. The task of the female narrator (“Antonie von Arneth”), who becomes the caretaker of the daughter as much as she provides a sufficient closure to the text, will be to “impart on her an understanding of the things of the world” (162). When the female narrator provides the girl with a new home and a healthy environment, her abnormally large head miraculously shrinks back to a normal size. Only those parts of the story appear in the narrative that we are able to bear, to overcome, restore, or heal. This might be the reason why so much attention is paid to the bureaucratic interventions, to the restitution of property rights, and questions of inheritance through which some

sort of order can be reestablished in the end. The rest is “wonderful” pedagogy, or rather, learning through literature. Pedagogy is a main concern—always in Stifter but in particular in “Tourmaline”—for it teaches an understanding of the things of the world, cleans the house of narration, puts up a new order, and teaches a reading and writing that implies reference, reliability, and context. The symbiotic dyad of mother and child that has provided an internal image and a frame of the textual space has been removed from narration, retrieved in an assiduous and miraculous way, and finally will be restored in the substitution of an ambivalent *Rabenmutter/holden Mutter* by a foster mother who dresses up and instructs the monstrous heir of a crypt and turns her into a human being.

Not without reason, the daughter ends up in the same position, from which her own mother removed herself: she makes “rugs, blankets, and the likes for sales, from the proceeds of which, together with the interest from her small inheritance, she was able to live” (162). Weaving, as Walter Benjamin reminds us, is closely related to storytelling. On a textual level the female friend of the narrator—a good housewife, mother, and educator—fulfills the desire of this “dark” text to find its way back to “realism,” giving a comprehensible, coherent account, and producing a text under the *aegis* of that gentle law that matches its promise of meaning.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Don’t let me finish this thing only half-way through,” Stifter wrote to Heckenast: “Help me to keep a cheerful, uplifted mood, for this is for the plant like soil, air, and sun, as much as vexation is like mildew and poison for it.” – “[L]assen Sie mich das Ding nicht halb vollenden, helfen Sie mir, eine heitere, gehobene Stimmung zu erhalten; denn diese ist für das Gewächs Boden, Luft und Sonne, so wie Verdruß Mehltau und Gift dafür.” Adalbert Stifter, letter to Gustav Heckenast, February 7, 1852 (XVIII: 107).

<sup>2</sup> “You will realize the improvement, and the amount of work. Even Goethe transcribed his *Iphigenie* five times. [...] Think of the litharge, the transparency, and the filing!” – “Sie werden die Verbesserung erkennen, und

werden die Menge an Arbeit erkennen. Hat doch Göthe seine Iphigenie fünfmal abgeschrieben. [...] Welche Glätte, welche Durchsichtigkeit, welche Feile!" (Stifter, XVIII: 107)

<sup>3</sup> "My only pain is, that I won't be able to put this story away for a year in order to revise it. I imagine, it would turn into a clear and intimate masterpiece." – "Mein Schmerz ist nur der, daß ich jetzt diese Erzählung nicht ein Jahr kann liegen lassen, um an eine Umarbeitung zu gehen. Ich bilde mir ein, sie würde ein einfaches klares inniges Meisterwerk werden." Stifter, letter to Gustav Heckenast, July 27, 1852 (Stifter, XVIII: 120).

<sup>4</sup> "Receive herewith for the first time a book that your father has written, read his words for the first time in print, which until now you only have heard from his lips. Be good as the children in this book, keep it as a memory. If you are once about to abandon good, let these pages ask you not to go there." – "Empfange hier zum ersten Mal ein Buch, das Dein Vater verfaßt hat, lese zum ersten Male seine Worte im Druke [sic], die Du sonst nur von seinen Lippen gehört hast, sei gut, wie die Kinder in diesem Buche; behalte es als Andenken; wenn Du einst von dem Guten weichen wolltest, so lasse Dich durch diese Blätter bitten, es nicht zu tun" (Hein 574). Albrecht Koschorke calls this dedication a "literarische Adoptionsurkunde" (literary certificate of adoption, Koschorke 323). Juliane Mohaupt attempted to run away from home several times; and in 1857 she drowned herself in the Danube.

<sup>5</sup> "[D]ie strenge Folgerichtigkeit, die poetische Gerechtigkeit und die vollständige Geschlossenheit."

<sup>6</sup> His biographer Theodor Klaiber criticized that Stifter was getting lost in the wide depiction of exterior things and furniture (Klaiber 79).

<sup>7</sup> Eva Geulen (1992) attributed his manic and abundant descriptions to his dependence on words ("Worthörigkeit"), his desire to fill any possible interval or gap that might produce a disturbed coherence.

<sup>8</sup> Antonie von Arneth née Adamberger (1790-1867) had been a successful actress in her youth and later a benevolent caretaker; she even helped Stifter finding a new home for his foster child Josepha Mohaupt. She had

been Theodor Körner's fiancée and was later married to Joseph von Arneth (1791-1863) with whom she had one son, Alfred (1819-1897) who is also mentioned in "Tourmaline." In early 1853 Antonie von Arneth thanks Stifter in a letter for introducing her in "Tourmaline" as the female "friend" and adds: "How proud I am that you found my little sketch worth considering. However, I know very well that it is the frame that turned it into what it is, and if it is a tourmaline, it is beaded with pearls." – "Wie stolz bin ich, daß Sie meine kleine Skizze einer Beachtung werth gehalten haben. Freilich weiß ich wohl, das, was es ist, hat der Rahmen dazu gethan, und ist's ein Turmalin, so ist er in Perlen gefaßt." (Stifter, 2.3: 412-13).

<sup>9</sup> Lange's second wife, Luise Maria Antonia Weber was Mozart's sister-in-law and also a well-known actress. In 1798, she left Lange for an engagement in Amsterdam and never returned to him.

<sup>10</sup> Laurence A. Rickels connects Stifter's traumatic childhood memory with the only incident Goethe recollects from his childhood in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* when he threw "with great pleasure" his parents' pots onto the street (Rickels, *Abberations* 235). Both Goethe's and Stifter's autobiographical anecdotes follow the movement of "fort" and "da."

<sup>11</sup> Literally translatable as: "Mother, a stalk of grain is growing there." For an insightful reading of the relation between the encrypted code of *Kornhalm* and other *Merkmale* see: Rickels "Stifter's Nachkommenschaften."

<sup>12</sup> In German the expression "Rabenmutter" (raven-mother) indicates a negligent mother and/or a mother who abandons her child(ren).

<sup>13</sup> "Hieroglyphen des Unheimlichen" (Macho 741).

<sup>14</sup> "This crypt no longer rallies the easy metaphors of the Unconscious (hidden, secret, under-ground, latent, other, etc.) [...]. Instead, using that first object as a background, it is a kind of "false unconscious," an "artificial" unconscious lodged like a prothesis, a graft in the heart of an organ, within the divided self" (Derrida, "Fors" xiii).

<sup>15</sup> The French *fort* (interior) and the implied Latin *foris*



(exterior) must be read in conjunction with the German *FORT*.

<sup>16</sup> The young boy, trying to grasp the (forbidden) raven, reminds of the boy in “Granite,” who allows a vagabond to paint his feet with pitch and will be penalized by mother and grandmother with a withdrawal of love. The panic of the boy in “Tourmaline,” who did not do anything wrong but abhors the penalty of his mother finds such penalty anticipates in the reaction of the monstrous figure with the over-dimensional head who appears in the window.

<sup>17</sup> Eva Geulen (1993) pointed out that the tale of the girl with the big head could be read as a variation of the case of Kaspar Hauser, a young man who appeared in 1828 in the streets of Nuremberg claiming that he has been raised in total isolation of a darkened cell. Part of the enthrallment in regard to Kaspar Hauser, who claimed to have been exposed to sunlight after being released from his prison for the first time, was his unawareness of the deformations of his body and of the injustice he had suffered from. In a similar way the deformed daughter of the *Rentherr* is neither happy nor unhappy, and rather willing than reluctant.

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#### Image Notes

- p.21 The Dissolution of Reality into a Simple Form,  
p. 23 The Messenger/Tower, p. 25 Duluth’s Plasma  
Center, p. 26 The Mythology of Past and Present  
(detail), p. 28 Broken Chords (detail)

## ADDICTION MACHINES

AUTHOR • JAMES GODLEY  
ARTIST • VALENTIN HENNIG

Entry into the crypt William Burroughs shared with his mother opened and shut around a failed re-enactment of William Tell's shot through the prop placed upon a loved one's head. The accidental killing of his wife Joan completed the installation of the addiction machine that spun melancholia as manic dissemination. An early encryptment to which was added the audio portion of abuse deposited an undeliverable message in WB. William could never tell, although his corpus bears the inscription of this impossibility as another form of possibility.

James Godley is currently a doctoral candidate in English at SUNY Buffalo, where he studies psychoanalysis, Continental philosophy, and nineteenth-century literature and poetry (British and American). His work on the concept of mourning and "the dead" in Freudian and Lacanian approaches to psychoanalytic thought and in Gothic literature has also spawned an essay on zombie porn.

Since entering the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe in 2007, Valentin Hennig has studied in the classes of Silvia Bächli, Claudio Moser, and Corinne Wasmuht. In 2010 he spent a semester at the Dresden Academy of Fine Arts. His work has been shown in group exhibitions in Freiburg and Karlsruhe.

L'entrée dans la crypte à laquelle participent William Burroughs et sa mère s'ouvre et se ferme autour d'une représentation échouée de la légende de Guillaume Tell essayant d'atteindre une pomme placée sur la tête d'un être aimé. Le meurtre accidentel de sa femme achève l'installation de la machine d'*addiction* qui file la mélancolie comme une diffusion frénétique. Un encodage précoce auquel s'ajoute une part audio de l'abus induit un message impossible à livrer en WB. William ne peut jamais le dire (*tell*), bien que son corps porte l'inscription de cette impossibilité comme une autre sorte de possibilité.

James Godley est actuellement doctorant en anglais à l'Université de Buffalo où il étudie la psychanalyse, la philosophie continentale et la littérature du dix-neuvième siècle des États-Unis, ainsi que celle de l'Angleterre. Son travail sur les concepts de deuil et des « décédés » de la psychanalyse freudienne et lacanienne dans la littérature gothique sert d'inspiration pour un article au sujet de la *zombie porn*.

Valentin Hennig s'inscrit à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe en 2007. Il étudie sous la direction de Silvia Bächli, de Claudio Moser, ainsi que de Corinne Wasmuht. En 2010, il étudie à l'École d'enseignement supérieur des beaux-arts à Dresde. Ses œuvres apparaissent dans des expositions collectives à Freiburg et à Karlsruhe.



## I.

The format of *Naked Lunch* and of its predecessor, *Queer*, consists of what the author called “routines:” short, satirical narratives which, somewhat like vaudeville routines, depict larger-than-life characters in situations of exaggerated violence and eroticism. However, this emphasis on drama derives from trauma, specifically Burroughs’ shooting and killing of his common-law wife Joan Vollmer during a “William Tell act.” This event, which he later claimed instigated his commitment to a career in writing, is transferred to *Naked Lunch* in the form of routines that carry out, under their veil of dark humor, attempts to master the traumatic effects of the killing and to answer for them.

In September 1951, Burroughs was infatuated with Lewis Marker, a 19-year-old expatriate attending Mexico City College (Burroughs, *Word Virus* 40-41). At first responsive to Burroughs’ sexual advances, Marker agreed to accompany him on an expedition to South America in search of the hallucinogenic vine *yagé*. At the end of their trip, now put off by Burroughs’ longing, Marker returned home separately. A few days later, Burroughs, back in Mexico, had some drinks with Joan at an acquaintance’s loft, where, to Burroughs’ surprise, Marker was also present. Joan, who knew of the affair, and who had grown increasingly weary of Burroughs’ prolonged absences and neglect of his parental responsibilities to their two children, made withering remarks and jokes about Burroughs’ love of guns, among other subjects. At some time during the course of the party, Burroughs suggested to Joan that the two of them “show the guys what kind of shot old Bill is,” and they staged what Burroughs called a “William Tell act.” Joan put her gin glass on top of her head and stood at the far end of the room, whereupon Burroughs took out his revolver and shot her in the head, killing her instantly (Burroughs, *Word Virus* 41).

The “act,” simultaneously performance and traumatic reality, revealed itself to Burroughs as a spontaneously composed routine which had, as its express purpose, the murder of an intimate enemy. James Grauerholz, Burroughs’ adopted son and personal secretary, makes the case for the confluence of Burroughs’ killing with an

earlier trauma: “[A]ll his life Burroughs had a dark fascination with ‘possession’ by malign spirits; his dread of possession may have had its roots in a childhood molestation by his nanny” (Grauerholz 70). The nanny, Mary Evans, brought a four-year-old Burroughs with her on an excursion to the local park, where they met up with Mary’s boyfriend who, at Mary’s urging, forced the boy to fellate him (Morgan 31). Burroughs’ mother probably discovered something was off, because Mary was soon asked to leave. Yet the act was never conveyed to his father.

The question of what the father knew proved to be a point of impasse in Burroughs’ psychoanalytic treatments, typified by his continually returning to, then blanking out on the molestation. At the time of one of his last treatments, Burroughs became desperate for the affections of his roommate, Jack Anderson (Morgan 74-75). In a desperate plea for attention, he performed a “Van Gogh act,” cutting off his pinky finger with a pair of poultry shears. He then immediately presented the finger to his analyst, Herbert Wiggers. Burroughs’ biographer Ted Morgan assessed the event as the expression of the need, after the molestation, to tell his father, whereby the giving of the finger amounted to the (negative-transferentially inflected) ‘telling’ (Morgan 75).

Laura Lee Burroughs believed she could communicate with the dead, and occasionally had prophetic visions and dreams (Miles 21). All his life, William not only believed wholeheartedly in his mother’s telepathic and prophetic powers, but believed that he sometimes possessed these abilities himself. The choice of the name William Lee as *nom de plume* for his first two novels carries forward Burroughs’ maternal identification into the career choice that coincided with the William Tell act, in which the untold act was also stowaway. While writing *Naked Lunch*, Burroughs recalls a certain “feeling” he had the day Joan died, and traced it back to a sense of fear and despair that came over him “for no outward reason” when he was a child. As Burroughs writes to Allen Ginsberg:

I was looking into the future then. I recognize the feeling, and what I saw has not yet been realized. I can only wait for it to happen. Is it some ghastly occur-

rence, like Joan's death, or simply deterioration and failure and final loneliness, a dead-end set up where there is no one I can contact? I am just a crazy old bore in a bar somewhere with my routines? I don't know but I feel trapped and doomed. (Miles 76-77)

William paints himself in the exact colors he used to describe his mother: someone deeply sad, who can only helplessly await his doom, which he foresees approaching: "She suffered from headaches and backaches, and there was something deeply sad about her, as though she expected doom to arrive at any moment" (Morgan 26). To Ginsberg, Burroughs explicitly admits he "had the same feeling the day Joan died," and that this feeling is linked to a specific point in his childhood (possibly the molestation, though the event is never mentioned). Having withdrawn from drugs and temporarily unable to write the routines that kept mourning at bay, Burroughs reaches out to Ginsberg in a state of excited, even desperate urgency. Ginsberg's characteristic maternal reassurance, however, inevitably fails to meet the demand of such a charged transference request. Thus, Burroughs' implacable demand creates the setting for a third correspondent to intervene, whose apparitional form rises to the surface as "ghastly" or ghostly recurrence threatening to leave Burroughs in a state of "final loneliness"—abandoned even, or especially, by his dead.

Burroughs' references to his mother seem to follow from the image of a powerfully far-sighted, but ultimately helpless, martyr. In *The Western Lands*, Burroughs de-

picts his mother once again as an estranged and expectant spectator: "Outside a Palm Beach bungalow waiting for a taxi to the airport. My mother's kind unhappy face, last time I ever saw her" (42). The next two sentences drop the sentiment: "Really a blessing. She had been ill for a long time" (42). The illness that Burroughs refers to is not a physical condition, but a period of senility following the death of her husband (Miles). Thus, in his beatific impression of Laura Lee the real blessing, in the end, is that she ends. Symbols of departure—the taxi, the airport—promise to expedite her towards the land of the dead, whose uncanny persistence, in this world, was symptomatic of an illness that afflicted her son as much as herself.

The style of Laura's unmourning can be detected in the series of flower-arranging books she produced for Coca Cola in the 1930s. In one, she describes her home: "It boasts no priceless furniture nor art treasures. Everything about the room is a background for flowers" (Rae). Flowers, long associated with the dead (in the pastoral tradition for instance), also represent, when arranged, one of the arts of the mortician. That she places flowers so resolutely into the foreground, in a setting otherwise devoid of emphasis, indicates a certain excess of commemoration. The family appears threatened by the floral invasion: "For years, my flower decorations in the making were a source of annoyance to my family. My efforts in the kitchen always seemed to time with the advent of a pie" (Rae). With a pie in the ascendant,



a more appetizing maternal introject, Laura can stow away the corpse meat, which, otherwise, the family feels she is trying to get under their skin. In his journal entry five days before the fatal heart attack, Burroughs writes:

So when I get to Lex—my mother screaming behind me she had some idea I should go to a private nut house—and I said: “All I need is [a] withdrawal cure. Period.” And she was very annoyed by me and Joan taking the bull by the horns and opting for Lexington. Mother said about Joan: “She was just like a tigress.” She said no to any enforced confinement. She was right there, and other where’s and there’s. What can I say—Why who where can I say—Tears are worthless unless genuine, tears from the soul and guts, tears that ache and wrench and hurt and tear. Tears for what was— (Grauerholz 70)

The withdrawal cure with which Burroughs answered his mother, the separation he needed from her, was never successful. Mourning and withdrawal on one side thus compete with the mother and addiction on the other. In between, Joan stands as the substitute that, “taking the bull by the horns,” falls under the sign of the father, enabling withdrawal and mourning. The “tears” of mourning mirror the ache and wrenching hurt of withdrawal, but they are not genuine. The cure never goes through; mourning is refused.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the act named after William Tell is that it committed Burroughs to fire by proxy at the head of his own fatherhood, the sign or son of the internal father. Part of Burroughs’ own sadism, besides the obvious and spectacular instance of his wife’s murder, would be carried out on Billy Jr. who, at four years, was the same age as his father and namesake when he was abused by the nanny. Bill Jr., writer of *Speed* and *Kentucky Ham*, was consequently (as he put it) “the shattered son of *Naked Lunch*” (*Cursed* vii). As he grew up, Billy would come to soak up his father’s crimes with booze and painkillers, essentially living out the life sentence his father skipped out on. Burroughs Jr. underwent a liver transplant operation when he was thirty, which, between the lines, dislodged the crypt. A case report, from the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, notes with fascination that Bill Jr. begins to see the new

liver as “a separate entity” (*Cursed* v). At first, the liver is felt to be “an alien piece of meat,” but soon he “began to feel he was ‘married’ to it; and in response to his surgeon’s mention of ‘foreign tissue,’ he replied, ‘that’s a hell of a way to talk about my new wife’” (*Cursed* v). The report continues: “He thought he had been given life a second time by the donor, who now existed inside him ‘by proxy’ as a separate entity” (*Cursed* v). Inside Bill Jr., the anonymous donor lives on in the organ of living on, the “liver,” and soon subsumes a certain occupancy already established: “At this point, he began to wear an earring that contained the engraving of the Virgin Mary. This concrete representation of the amalgamation of his mother and the donor (who was named Virginia) served as a talisman against damage to the transplanted liver” (*Cursed* v).

## II.

The agency of Burroughs’ haunting is what I am calling, under an emblematic heading, the addiction machine, whose three terms—addiction, dictation, and the adding machine—circumvent, through a combined operation, sublimation and repression, in favor of a fictive autonomy that ‘lives’ in place of the subject. This construct, in turn, serves as a cipher for the system Burroughs represents and projects in the image of the viral technological enterprise of capitalism, an image at once dreaded as intensely persecuting and idealized as the status quo that protects and comforts.

Burroughs’ addiction machine would not achieve its terminal, delusional form until after the writing of *Naked Lunch*, whereupon he began a series of intensive writing experiments in order to thwart a powerful virus he believed operated through a select group (including the CIA and the Narcotics Bureau), allowing them to manipulate the thoughts, actions, and emotions of the general population through the transmission of written language and telepathy. Eventually, Burroughs attributes the name “the Ugly Spirit” to this alien, infecting agent, theorizing that it originated with females, and was transmitted initially through a kind of vampiric sexual seduction. In *The Western Lands*, protagonist Kim Carsons is sent to investigate “what caused the Egyptians to go wrong and get bogged down with mummies and the

need to preserve the physical body” (74-75). The secret, Kim discovers, is that the Egyptians “had not solved the equation imposed by a parasitic female Other Half who needs a physical body to exist, being parasitic to other bodies” (75). The viral female diverts human evolution from the “natural state” of homosexual physical and spiritual union, the only means by which the immortal afterworld of the Western Lands can be reached. “We have been seduced from our biologic and spiritual destiny by the Sex Enemy” (75). Thus, on one side, heterosexuality, language, and telepathy take turns controlling the male subject as an invading feminine entity, mother or ‘mummy,’ causing him to experience unwanted bodily sensations and to conform to a disastrously destructive apparatus that enslaves the world’s population. On the other side, homosexual “contact” is idealized as a total union promising immortality, without the infirmities of the physical body or the ravages of age.

When Burroughs began his obsessive work on the cut-ups, which attempted to exorcise the “Ugly Spirit” he believed was inhabiting him, his writing hooked into techno-mediatic extensions, at first as analogies to his writing process, then as a literal mode of dictation (via tape recorders, film, and automatic writing). As Ginsberg describes, “the cut-ups were originally designed to rehearse and repeat his obsession with sexual images over and over again, like a movie repeating over and over . . . and then recombined and cut up and mixed in; so that finally the obsessive attachment, compulsion and preoccupation empty out and drain from the image” (Miles 138). Yet what Ginsberg, recalling Burroughs’ own descriptions, was analogizing, was, as biographer Barry Miles observes, far more elaborate in practice:

Like a routine taken to its ultimate end, Burroughs now suspected that the entire fabric of reality was artificially conditioned and that whoever was doing the conditioning was running the universe, like an engineer running a cinema soundstage with tape machines and films. He assumed that all reality, sight, taste, smell, sound and touch was some form of hallucination and that these apparent sensory impressions were programmed into our bodies. It was another variant on the search for the controllers, the search for the Ugly Spirit that had made him kill Joan. (139)

However valorizing, Ginsberg’s response to Burroughs’ growing delusional system, nonetheless, pinpointed its device of origin: “Ginsberg attributed much of it to the same Burroughs inventiveness which enabled his grandfather to invent the adding machine” (Miles 139).

William Burroughs, the grandfather, invented the first reliable prototype of the adding machine, which used hydraulics to regulate the pressure exerted on the handle pulled by its users to calculate basic arithmetic operations (*Word Virus* 3). The Burroughs Adding Machine Company prospered well into the 1920s, and the money from Mortimer Burroughs’ (the author’s father) share in his father’s company kept the family upper-middle class during the Great Depression. The image of the adding machine, therefore, evokes stability, even constancy; its operations are repetitive, yet easily manipulated. It serves as a quintessential prototype for an influencing machine, the common delusional imago of paranoid psychotics that Victor Tausk studied in his famous essay, and which Rickels relies on for his excavation of Artaud’s theater of cruelty.

The influencing machine appears when an attempt is made to resolve “an out-of-phase alternation between projection and identification” (Rickels, *Aberrations* 150). Like drugs in Avital Ronell’s reading of *Madame Bovary*, which provide “a discreet if spectacular way out” of deadlocked identifications (60), the influencing machine purveys the possibility of a new autonomy. Essentially, the influencing machine takes the whole psychic apparatus, as it is organized around the projection of sense organs and skews it, while retaining the complexity of the psyche’s functions. For his case illustration, Tausk presents his patient, Natalija A. Like Burroughs, Natalia A. writes in the mode of live transmission, as if by dictation: for many years she has been “writing everything down in lieu of her absent hearing” (Rickels, *Aberrations* 149). In analysis, Natalija gradually reveals the shape and scope of a delusional structure that administers identification with a persecutor “such that everything the enemy wants and does happens to the victim” (Rickels, *Aberrations* 149). From this position, a period of intense sensations of alteration follows, which eventually becomes projected or externalized as an all-powerful machine. In time, “enemy agents, often



physicians and professors, crowd the projection booth” and are granted control over the subject “to the extent that they always demand, and usually obtain, transfer of libido onto themselves” (Rickels, *Aberrations* 149).

Burroughs’ history on the couch (with Freudian, Jungian, and Reichian analysts) transfers, in his novels, into the manipulation of thought by those who employ, among other methods, psychoanalysis as part of an elaborate process of rendering subjects susceptible to suggestion. In *Naked Lunch*, Dr. Benway, a former psychoanalyst, is introduced, in different places, as a practicing surgeon and “a manipulator and coordinator of symbol systems, an expert on all phases of interrogation, brainwashing and control” (19, 51). As with the doctors and professors at the controls of Natalija’s influencing machine, Benway uses a delusional system to

invade and indoctrinate his subjects’ thoughts, which he also, often sadistically, intends to ‘protect.’

The supervision the addiction machine administers as regression or suggestion causes Burroughs to lapse into a state of radical alterity in which, as is the case with Natalija, “narcissistic libido and object libido are opposed” to such a degree that even the maintenance of “sexual preference and identity” become unhinged (Rickels, *Abberations* 149). Dr. Benway recalls the case of a female agent “who forgot her real identity and merged with her cover story” (24). This turns him onto the idea that agents can be made to repress their actual identity behind the fiction they are compelled, by necessity, to repeat. Thus, “his agent identity becomes unconscious, that is, out of his control; and you can dig it with drugs and hypnosis” (24). Intoxicants and



mind control thus take turns revealing and manipulating a secret agency that becomes totally dependent on the narcotic power of the interrogator, to the extent that sexual object choice, too, is assigned by an omnipotent other: “You can make a square heterosex citizen queer with this angle” (24). The threat implied in this reversal, that it transfers autonomy to another scene, is urgent enough for Burroughs to wonder whether the “lifelong addiction to a cellular cover” could ever be removed (275). Burroughs describes his self-state under the influence of addiction as a ‘cover,’ such that “when the cover is removed, everything that was held in check by junk spills out” (*Word Virus* 90). The cover is an elaborate construction and includes, to some extent, gender identifications and sexual object choice: “[H]omosexuality is the best all-around cover an agent can have” (*Naked Lunch* 180).

However, prior to projection and identification, Tausk theorizes an “inborn narcissism,” according to which the infant, entirely a sexual being, is, in effect, a body-genital (Rickels, *Aberrations* 150). Organs and their functions retain this vulnerable position when battling the progression of the ego as and in relation to the outside world. This “inborn narcissism,” a polymorphous Inter-zone of self-relations, lacks the facility to distinguish the boundaries between inner and outer realities. In a tight spot, the influencing machine constitutes the sort of cover story that the protective sheath of addiction also provides: “[B]y succumbing to an influencing machine, the schizophrenic casts out an emergency projection of his own body to circumvent regression” to inborn narcissism (Rickels, *Aberrations* 150). In *Naked Lunch*, addiction allows its subjects to stagger forward as junk-sick reflections of the body, pursuing a purpose alien to the ego’s sense of its own agency or identity.

Burroughs describes the process of finding a “useable vein” in a way analogous to the operation of a recording medium: “The body knows what veins you can hit and conveys this knowledge in the spontaneous movements you make preparing to take a shot . . . Sometimes the needle points like a dowser’s wand. Sometimes I must wait for the message. But when it comes I always hit blood” (*Naked Lunch* 56). The “message” he “must wait for” recalls the picture he has of his mother in the

receiving position “as though she expected doom to arrive at any moment” (Morgan 26). Thus, the message from the medium of junk is also his mother, the medium’s message of doom that she transmits to her son via the “Man Inside,” the pusher at the controls guiding the addict’s movements. If Lee is off his mark by a few days or a few grams, he either risks being totally devoured by the melancholic introject (suicide by overdose) or submitting to the withdrawal pains of mourning. Suspended between the threats of suicide and murder on one track, and libido and destrudo, on the other, addiction keeps him safe from himself in the meantime, the time of waiting.

### III.

In an audio recording, “The Last Words of Hassan Sabbah,” Burroughs interrogates his paternal name, as if it had been withholding some secret that had to be thrown into the visible world like a techno-mediatic projection: “All right, Mister Burroughs, who bears my name and my words, bear it all the way, for all to see, in Times Square, in Piccadilly. Play it all, play it all, play it all back! Pay it all, pay it all, pay it all back!” (“Last Words of Hassan Sabbah”). Both the adding machine and the name ‘Burroughs,’ which pays while it plays, keeps a record of gains and losses that, upon demand, must release its invisible calculations before the public it has manipulated.

In Rickels’ reading of Freud’s case study of Ratman (“Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis”), the rejection of the patronymic (rather than his identification with it) resulted in Ratman’s adoption of the “rat” totem as the heading for guilty payments to the dead father which never suffice to balance the account of death wishes which endlessly circulate and rebound without destination (*Aberrations* 163). For Burroughs, the unpayable debt is symbolized in the signifying constellation of the adding machine. In an economy of scores and hits, pushers and marks, adding machine and addiction perform a combined operation, tabulating the effectuality of the dose, appropriating loss into every calculation or addition. Burroughs calls this the Algebra of Need:

If you wish to alter or annihilate a pyramid of numbers in a serial relation, you alter or remove the bottom number. If we wish to annihilate the junk pyramid, we must start with the bottom of the pyramid: the Addict in the Street, and stop tilting quixotically for the “higher ups” so called, all of whom are immediately replaceable. The addict in the street who must have junk to live is the one irreplaceable factor in the junk equation. When there are no more addicts to buy junk there will be no junk traffic. As long as junk need exists, someone will service it. (*Naked Lunch* 201-02)

The only way to cancel the debt is by removing the “bottom number” of the equation. Burroughs’ solution threatens the commercial enterprise that profited his grandfather, who, by careful calculation (before he started his adding machine company he was a bank clerk), made himself a ‘higher up’ on the money/junk pyramid by producing a machine that computed “serial relations.” But William Burroughs II, the addict in the street, not in addition or serial relation to his paternal line, removed himself from the patronymic, calling himself by his mother’s maiden name for his first two novels.

The pyramid scheme, indeed a pharaoh’s or father’s tomb, consists of an interment, at the bottom level, guarded by many levels of elaborate traps, snares and false exits that mimic the effects of the devouring mouth. In *Naked Lunch*, addicts are prone to a thousand horrible fates: they overdose, they become absorbed in someone else’s body, or they get shot, lynched, burned alive, tortured, mind-controlled—and always to someone else’s profit (until the addicts, themselves, also succumb to some grisly fate). Each successive layer of power (or the autonomy and exercise of power, because ‘hooked,’ is always only an illusion) depends on its subsistence by devouring and assimilating the lower levels, such that the only way to break out of the junk pyramid is to remove the bottom layer. Taking out the bottom, expelling it, follows an anal reception of withdrawal and rehabilitation. Under the *aegis* of renewed sphincter training, the addict can learn to let go of his oral dependency. The “talking asshole,” as introduced by Dr. Benway, thus appears as a prescription (by a former psychoanalyst forcibly expelled from the Vienna

Circle). But it also doubles as a proposed antidote to maternal encryption, an “all-purpose hole” that evacuates what it incorporates (110).

Like cartoons and comics, Burroughs’ Hieronymus Bosch-like anthropomorphic and physically inverted figurines—Mugwumps, monster centipedes, the talking asshole—all follow the fecal re-routing and lubrication of identifications with the pre-Oedipal or primal father. Caricature, as Rickels argues by way of Ernst Kris’ *Psychoanalytical Explorations in Art*, is aimed at the libidinous satisfaction of aggressive impulses, which “allows for more bearable acceptance of father down the laugh track” (*Vampire Lectures* 276). Adding to the store of the ego’s techniques for getting around and getting along with the strictures of the paternal superego, these comic inscriptions were originally conceived via caricature’s “autoplastic ancestor,” the grimace (Rickels, *California* 40). The psychotic defends against a foreign body’s immanent takeover through repeated grimacing before his own mirror image, a routine of trying on different personae: he attempts to save “face by making faces which, like apotropaic masks, also ward off the demons” (Rickels, *California* 44).

The donning of faces, masks, or alter-egos is thus an attempt at stabilizing the psychotic’s fragile contact with an outside world, protecting him from impending threats of possession. In *Naked Lunch*’s “Post-Script” Burroughs writes:

Sooner or later the Vigilante, the Rube, Lee the Agent [...] Doc Benway, “Fingers” Schaefer are subject to say the same thing in the same words, to occupy, at that intersection point, the same position in space-time. Using a common vocal apparatus complete with all metabolic appliances—that is, to be the same person—a most inaccurate way of expressing Recognition: the junky naked in sunlight. (186)

Note that the point of *cathexis*, or occupation in “space-time,” of these prosthetic personae requires an artificial medium for speaking rigged to a technologized metabolism of “appliances” or serviceable organs. The effect of this technological reordering of the body then expresses “recognition” as inaccurate, as a foreign body illegible to the other’s readout. This foreign antibody left “naked

in sunlight”—the un-key—links up the son with the father watching him through the mirror:

The writer seeing himself reading to the mirror as always . . . He must check now and again to reassure himself that the Crime of Separate Action has not, is not, cannot occur . . . Anyone who has looked in the mirror knows what this crime is and what it means in terms of lost control when the reflection no longer obeys . . . Too late to dial *p o l i c e* . . . (186)

The demons threaten to take possession, if reading the mediumistic message to the mirror succeeds in finding recognition—in making the specular image a spook or dead junky.

Burroughs’ “talking asshole” routine represents an attempt to short-circuit the possessing entity’s manipulations by removing the self from the field of the father’s influence. This is what Artaud attempts in his theater of cruelty when he breaks from “the dictation-dictatorship of phonic linearity” by producing an alternate transmission of linguistic meaning (*Naked Lunch* 135). Instead of making ‘sense’ in a linear way, Artaud would “recycle the refuse of language . . . including the lapsus, the stutter, and . . . even the rumbling of the stomach and other sounds” (*Naked Lunch* 135). Similarly, the talking asshole delivers its messages on a “gut frequency;” its speech emerges synaesthetically, as “a bubbly thick stag-

nant sound, a sound you could *smell*” (*Naked Lunch* 111). The smell-sound provokes an internal reaction in the listener, to the extent that hearing the asshole speak is also an auto-auscultation: it “hit you right down there like you gotta go” (111). Even before the anecdote begins, Benway’s associate, Dr. Schaefer complains that he cannot get a certain “stench” out of his lungs. This mysterious, stinky internalization, like a rotting corpse, leads Schaefer to bemoan the “scandalous inefficiency” of the human body, with a mouth and anus that can get “out of order” (111). Instead, why not “seal up nose and mouth, fill in the stomach, make an air hole direct to the lungs where it should have been in the first place?” (111). If this were the case, after all, no poisons or corpses would ever be incorporated, and nothing that was already being retained would ever have to be let go. Thus, what has been incorporated is not being properly metabolized, leading Schaefer to fantasize “one all-purpose hole to eat and eliminate,” in effect, a process of internalization less subject to aberrant, secret transformations and mysterious blockages (111).

Insofar as the working-through of loss necessarily involves active psycho-somatic metabolization, the “all-purpose hole” excludes mourning altogether. In the story, the man’s asshole not only takes over his speech, speaking for him, but also dispossesses him of eating and digestion. The anus develops “sort of teeth-like lit-



tle raspy incurving hooks,” then tells the man “we don’t need you around here anymore. I can talk and eat *and* shit” (110). But, watch the slip: the “we” that the asshole drops blows the cover of a secret encryption. The asshole turns on the man, takes over his bodily functions, and develops a parasitic growth, a “virus” that grows until it effectively destroys the man, paralleling the way Burroughs once described his routines: turning on him, growing more insane, a “literal growth like cancer” (Miles 75).

Rickels follows Karl Abraham’s theory of archaic mourning down to the close-range distinction between the divergent ways in which melancholia and paranoia preserve lost objects:

The Urmund, especially the anus with teeth, opens onto the anal/oral recycling system of archaic mourning which, veiled by resistance to chewing or biting, is lodged, according to a logic of double projection, inside paranoia. The aperture of paranoid projection is thus the anus: whereas the melancholic’s introjection of the lost object is oral and, hence, total, addressing the entire corpse which must be swallowed whole, intact and undisclosed, the paranoid incorporates anally only body parts. (*California* 141)

The talking asshole’s “raspy, little incurving hooks” develop (as combined biting-mouth and anus) in order to break apart the distrusted objects it incorporates. At first, the man dictates to the asshole what lines to use and when; then, after a while, when this ventriloquism becomes habit or routine, the asshole stokes the current of addiction and takes over.

The staging of the routine was inspired by a barker at the flesh fair: “He had a number he called “The Better ‘Ole” that was a scream” (*Naked Lunch* 111). The B movie reference Burroughs makes in this allusion is a primal scream of cinema. As only the second full-length sound picture, “The Better ‘Ole,” starring Syd Chaplin (the shadowy older brother of the silent Chaplin), used the short-lived Vitaphone method of recording sound on a disc that was separate from the film reel (as opposed to ‘live’ synchronous recording, Frisroe). The film premiered a year before the *Jazz Singer*, the first formal “talkie.” The “‘Ole” in the title refers to the foxholes of

World War I (a line in the film goes: “If you know of a better ‘ole—go to it!”); but of course, Burroughs recognizes its other scene. Talking cinema, like speech itself according to Jones, premieres from the other orifice that the oral, respiratory function supersedes only secondarily. Burroughs’ blueprint for surviving in the midst of the addiction machine’s persecutions also parallels the advance of sound into cinema. In the case of both cinema and the talking asshole, a mere accessory to the specular realm ‘takes over,’ becoming:

the sex that passes the censors, squeezes through between bureaus, because there’s always a space between, in popular songs and Grade B movies, giving away the basic American rottenness, spurting out like breaking boils, throwing out globs of that un-D.T. to fall anywhere and grow into some degenerate cancerous life-form, reproducing a hideous random image. (*Naked Lunch* 112)

From sound to sight, America exhibits, in the anal underworld of B cinema and popular songs, something that rots away at the foundation.

Thus, what starts as a private affliction, a secret burial lodged in the anus of a subject unwilling or unable to mourn, becomes an unstoppable force, a viral pandemic, that infects through technical-mediatic outlets, turning millions into corpse-carrying machines. This, in sum, is Burroughs’ great fear for the planet: that it will be overrun by what are, essentially, zombies. The cold, inhuman part of us that exerts its influence most palpably when we are dependent on ‘substances’ (like zombies hooked on brains) is also the part of us that would wish or strike dead the parts of ourselves that exert autonomy of any sort (especially libidinal). The addiction machine, finally, is not entirely within Burroughs, but is an entity that exists in the Interzone between psychical and social reality—in culture at large—whose imminent takeover promises to be irrevocable and final.

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## ELSE LASKER-SCHÜLER AND THE POETICS OF INCORPORATION

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In Else Lasker-Schüler's poetry and prose, we find the desire or wish to be devoured by the love object while consuming the object in turn. In this analysis the merger or turn of phrase is tied to the subject's own constitutive incorporation of a dead loved one. Now living objects must be loved to death or undeath. It was her mother's death that guided Lasker-Schüler to live and love on as haunted subject to repeat and rehearse the love object's loss or departure via fantasies of incorporation.

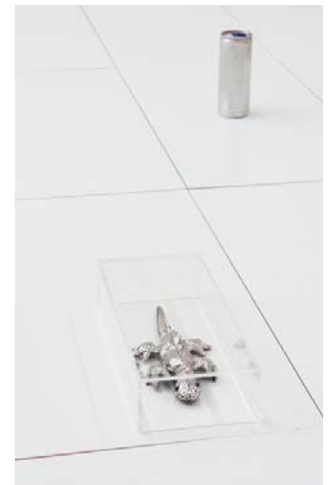
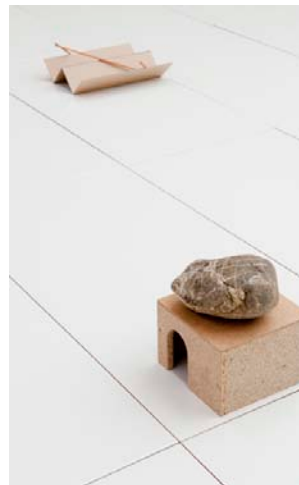
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On trouve le désir ou l'espoir d'être dévoré par l'objet aimé en même temps qu'on consomme l'objet à son tour dans la prose et la poésie d'Else Lasker-Schüler. Dans cette analyse, cette fusion ou cette tournure de phrase prend sa source dans le fait que le sujet cause l'incorporation constitutive d'un être aimé décédé. À partir de là, on doit aimer les objets encore vivants jusqu'à la mort ou à la « contre-mort » de ceux-ci. La mort de sa mère dirige Lasker-Schüler vers la façon de vivre et d'aimer d'un individu hanté : répéter la perte de l'objet aimé ou son départ à travers le fantasme d'incorporation.

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Mourning requires that the dead live on “in us”; interiorizing or incorporating the dead is the difficult yet inescapable task of the one who is left behind.<sup>1</sup> Psychoanalysis reminds us too of the pathological aspects of incorporation. The German-Jewish poet, playwright, and writer of prose, Else Lasker-Schüler, continuously confronted death; she survived the deaths of her mother, brother, and only child, among others. Her mother died in 1890, when the author was twenty-one years old, eight years after the death of her favorite brother. She described her mother’s death as having broken her world apart (Durchschlag-Litt and Litman Demeestère 18). Throughout her texts, there is the continual return to the subject of the mother’s death. The author’s identity as perpetual mourner, as one who carries the dead within her texts, who writes repeatedly of and to the dead, also cosigns texts, which are otherwise addressed to sexualized or romantic love objects. These texts reveal the ways in which desire becomes bound up with the experience of mourning. In her *oeuvre* there is, furthermore, almost no attachment, which might not be preemptively mourned; the encounter with the loved other often appears alongside the possibility of departure or absence.

“Das Lied des Spielprinzen” (“The Song of the Playmate Prince”) is an important poem with which to begin marking the crucial links between the questions of mourning and desire in Lasker-Schüler’s work. The poem was published in the 1917 collection *Gottfried Benn*, named after the German poet to whom Lasker-Schüler had, in fact, been romantically attached. The two authors addressed each other in publications in several Expressionist journals, and years later, Benn identified Lasker-Schüler as one of the greatest poets of twentieth-century Germany (Newton 2). The poem was published after the end of the affair, prompting many biographers to identify Lasker-Schüler’s suffering over the break with her Song that gave it voice (Falkenberg 76).

Wie kann ich dich mehr noch lieben?/Ich sehe den Tieren und Blumen/Bei der Liebe zu./Küssen sich zwei Sterne,/Oder bilden Wolken ein Bild-/Wir spielten es schon zarter./Und deine harte Stirne,/Ich kann mich so recht an sie lehnen,/Sitz drauf wie auf einem Giebel./ Und in deines Kinnes Grube/Bau ich mir ein Raub-

nest--/Bis-du mich aufgefressen hast./Find dann einmal morgens/Nur noch meine Kniee,/Zwei gelbe Skarabäen für eines Kaisers Ring. (*Gesammelte Werke* 1: 209)

How can I love you even more?/I watch the flowers and animals/At their love./If two stars kiss,/Or if clouds form a picture--/We’ve already played it more gently still./And your hard brow,/I can lean myself against it./Sit on it like a gable./And in the hollow of your chin/I build a robber’s hideaway--/Until—you’ve eaten me all up./Find then one fine morning/Only my knees left over,/Two yellow scarabs for an emperor’s ring. (Newton 169)

The poem begins with the question of how the speaker might approach the love object. There is an urge or call to love more, to find a more complete approach to desire. The poem closes by envisioning a process of incorporation whereby the subject would be devoured and thereby preserved and hidden away within the object’s implicit withdrawal (Rickels 6). The poem thus opens a site in which the limits of incorporation are exceeded or overcome.

Paralleling the speaker of the poem’s call to find or locate a “hideaway” in the other’s face, it is in the body of the text that wishes for incorporation can be expressed or stored. Abraham and Torok underscore the difference between the healthy mourner’s capacity to introject and what goes into the “illness” of incorporation:

Such is the fantasy of *incorporation*. Introducing all or part of a love object or a thing into one’s own body, possessing, expelling or alternately acquiring, keeping, losing it—here are varieties of fantasy indicating, in the typical forms of possession or feigned dispossession, a basic intrapsychic situation: the situation created by the reality of a loss sustained by the psyche. If accepted and worked through, the loss would require major readjustment. But the fantasy of incorporation merely simulates profound psychic transformation through magic; it does so by implementing literally something that has only figurative meaning. So in order not to have to “swallow” the loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing. (126)



Abraham and Torok emphasize the mourner's desire to swallow the object. In "Das Lied des Spielprinzen," the I of the poem wishes that the addressee would suspend her within this opening of mourning.

It is often the case that the mourner fantasizes entering into the body of the lost other, a reversal that facilitates the fantasy that the loved other remain. Lasker-Schüler's poem ensures that the speaker, or I of the poem, and the addressed other will merge, or rather that the I be subsumed at the other's address, since separation can be averted only through the speaker's wish for consumption. Crucially, unlike the desire to devour the other, in "Das Lied des Spielprinzen," there is the desire for the annihilation of the self, the desire to be devoured by the other or you addressed in the poem. The act of incorporation turns onto—into—the self: "And your hard brow,/I can lean myself against it,/Sit on it like a gable./ And in the hollow of your chin/I build a robber's hide-away--/Until—you've eaten me all up./Find then one fine morning/Only my knees left over,/Two yellow scarabs for an emperor's ring" (Newton 169). The speaker offers herself as object to be incorporated by the other. It is here that the effects of mourning may be most palpably felt. Freud, in his seminal essay "Mourning and Melancholia," discusses the problematic, if not elusive, question of the way in which, in mourning and melancholia alike, the ego allows the shadow of the object to "fall" upon it (249). Lasker-Schüler writes as one who carries the dead within her; she explicitly wrote of her belief in ghosts and her identity as one who was haunted (Newton 8-9). Even, or especially, in a poem dedicated to desire, the author is identifying with the dead, and, as in her treatment of her lost objects, wishes herself to be carried in the body of the sexualized love object.

The suicidal impulse of the one who cannot complete mourning can be reformulated as the desire for absorption in the other's body, which entails the self's annihilation. Punctuation interrupts this moment of self-destruction; a hyphen cuts into the two lines, which move toward the devouring of the speaker. Language itself mimics the speaker's disappearance; the moments of silence in the text remind of the inevitable loss of voice, which would take place upon immersion in the other. Freud remarks, on the question of love and suicide, that

both demonstrate the state of the ego overwhelmed by the object: "In the two opposed situations of being most intensely in love and of suicide the ego is overwhelmed by the object, though in totally different ways" (252).

The question persists whether the disappointing end of Lasker-Schüler's relationship with Benn is directly at stake in the poem "Das Lied des Spielprinzen." Since it is suggested that it was Benn who ended their brief affair, she, as "ex-", casts her ghostly shadow upon him (Falkenberg 94). Perhaps there is an effort, materializing in the space of the text, to deny the loss incurred at the end of the amorous relationship. Lasker-Schüler marked herself as an author who continuously blended the spaces of fiction and biography, signing letters, for example, with the names of her created characters. She mythologized herself, in one instance stating that, though she was raised in Elberfeld, she, in fact, was born in Thebes (Durchslag-Litt and Litman-Demeestère 14). In "Das Lied des Spielprinzen," the symbol of the scarab and its regal setting reflect her interest in mythology. It remains undecided to what degree biographical experience, in this case the reality of the relationship between the two writers, can be aligned with the poem. The poem's title refers to a prince, recalling Lasker-Schüler's repeated references to herself as the Prince of Thebes, thereby destabilizing any clear or singular identity. And yet, Lasker-Schüler invites entry into her biography by placing the collection under Benn's name.

The comingling of fiction and biography echoes the way in which self and other combine. In many of her texts, Lasker-Schüler includes the wish for a return to the mother's body. In the poem "Chaos," ("Chaos") from the 1902 collection *Styx*, the following words parallel the movement of the I in "Das Lied des Spielprinzen":

Ich wollte, ein Schmerzen rege sich/Und stürze mich  
grausam nieder/Und riß mich jäh an mich!/Und es lege  
eine Schöpferlust/Mich wieder in meine Heimat/Unter  
der Mutterbrust./Meine Mutterheimat ist seeleer./Es  
blühen dort keine Rosen/Im warmen Odem mehr.--  
/...Möcht einen Herzallerliebsten haben,/Und mich in  
seinem Fleisch vergraben. (Durchslag-Litt and Litman-  
Demeestère 54-57)

I need a pain to pierce/To strike me cruelly down/To

rip me into my self!/O, for the power, the will/To bear  
me back to my homeland/Beneath the maternal breast./  
My motherland is soulless,/ Roses no longer bloom/In  
her warm breath./....Would I had my heart's beloved,/  
To bury myself in his flesh. (Durchslag-Litt and Lit-  
man-Demeestère 54-57)

In this poem, as in other texts, the concept of home is equated with the figure of the mother (Snook 224-25). The desire for a return to the “mother’s breast” figured as a return home attaches to the desire for burial. This figuration of return becomes possible only through the advent of the experience of pain; the desire for the mother’s body transmits the self’s shattering or wounding. Burial takes place in the heart of the “most loved” other, someone, in part, offered as substitution for the maternal object. The image of the mother’s death is contained in the lines in which breath ceases, a breath pictured here as related to life-giving forces; the roses can no longer bloom in the mother’s presence. It is, then, after an interruption through a hyphen and ellipses that the I moves toward the space of incorporation; the poem reveals the other to be male at its close: “his flesh.”

These lines from “Chaos” are sustained by the integral connection between mourning and sexual impulses or instincts. There is the often-noted upsurge in sexual desire on the occasion of a loved person’s death. This desire works both sides of what develops into ambivalence: on one side, Melanie Klein emphasizes the triumph of fulfillment of early death wishes; on the other side, Abraham and Torok refer to a “final, climactic outpouring of love” for the deceased (103). In “Chaos,” a poem that traces the effects of pain and death, a connection is clearly established between the mourning over the mother’s absence and the desire for incorporation. The poem returns to the mother’s death with the focus on the cessation of breath. The poem’s call to rip or puncture the subject echoes the author’s description of the breach her mother’s death introduced. The desire for a return to the mother’s body can only spell desire for entombment or burial, as the mother’s body is an interred corpse.

The entombment of the mother’s body additionally requires the ingestion of the favorite brother Paul’s body;

Paul died eight years before the mother, who transferred the unmourned loss of her child into his surviving sibling (Rickels 31). Throughout Lasker-Schüler’s work, there is a parallel idealization of both mother and brother. In a 1932 prose text, *Die Eichhörnchen* (*The Squirrels*), the brother is named a young king, a presence echoed in the poem already bearing in its title the turn towards the princely, “The Song of the Playmate Prince” (*Gesammelte Werke* 2: 604). Significantly, the mother/brother loss is repeated through Lasker-Schüler’s later loss of her own son, Paul, whom she named after her missing brother, Paul. Upon her son’s death, the author inevitably replicates her own mother’s loss of her brother. Thus her internal mother supports her in her grief. Lasker-Schüler’s son’s death furthers identification with the deceased mother.

The injunction in Lasker-Schüler’s work to remember and inscribe the dead internally and forever finds a corollary in the wish for others to remember. The last stanza of “Das Lied des Spielprinzen,” issues a guarantee that the speaker of the poem will be re-membered by the other: “Find dann einmal morgens/Nur noch meine Kniee,/Zwei gelbe Skarabäen für eines Kaisers Ring” (*Gesammelte Werke* 1: 209). “Find then one fine morning/Only my knees left over,/Two yellow scarabs for an emperor’s ring” (Newton 169). Though only pieces of the self remain, the image of the knees, underscoring brutality and annihilation, is aligned with the divine and the magical. The scarab, a symbol of divinity in ancient Egypt, is also used as talisman. Though reduced to the level of adornment—the knees described as two yellow scarabs appropriate for an emperor’s ring—the remains of the speaker, nonetheless, become prized possessions that, moreover, possess divine power. There is thus the magical, which remains. Incorporation, as Derrida underscores in his discussion of the question of crypt-keeping, is on the side of the fantastical and magical (Derrida xvii). Not only will the other be made to remember through the forced inclusion of the speaker into the other’s body, that which remains will install a type of power over the other. Lasker-Schüler’s repeated depiction of the poet as possessing divine power is reintroduced here via the image of the scarab. For her, it is the poet who can experience divinity (*Gesammelte*

*Werke 2*: 329).

The author's linking of the maternal with the often mystified or magical realm of the literary solidifies the connection throughout much of her *oeuvre* between ghosts and the space of the text. The author's mother is repeatedly identified as the one who inducted her into the world of literature, marking the maternal legacy as one doubly tied to language (Cohn 19). There is thus, hidden within Lasker-Schüler's understanding of literary invention as divine, another origin lying in the ghostly; language's magical elements are again tied to the dead. It is the mother who, in order to preserve a link to the entrance into the poetic, must be incorporated. Language itself, for Lasker-Schüler, the possibility of its inception, is perhaps always envisioned within the context of loss. Furthermore, there is the notion of language as lost; a belief is presented throughout her *oeuvre* in a mythic, early language which, presumed lost, must be sought (Hedgepeth 48).

Although the I of "Das Lied des Spielprinzen" desires a brutal consummation, desires her body to be consumed by the other, simultaneously, the pain that would be inflicted by the speaker on the loved object is present. Aggression in the poem is addressed to both self and other, mimicking the fluctuations of sadism and masochism. The third and fourth stanzas of the poem mark the violence that would be inflicted on the loved object's body through the speaker's desire to become a part of that body: "Und deine harte Stirne,/Ich kann mich so recht an sie lehnen,/Sitz drauf wie auf einem Giebel./Und in deines Kinnes Grube/Bau ich mir ein Raubnest--/Bis—du mich aufgefressen hast" (*Gesammelte Werke 2*: 209). "And your hard brow,/I can lean myself against it,/Sit on it like a gable./And in the hollow of your chin/I build a robber's hideaway--Until—you've eaten me all up" (Newton 169). The speaker transforms the "hard brow" into a space that can be usurped for the emplacement of her own body in the other's body, which must support the speaker. The sexual components within these images are also apparent. That the speaker wishes to sit on the other's body shows, moreover, that sexual desire here is tinged with violence. The act of installing oneself inside the cut-open chin of the addressed you both objectifies the other's body and inscribes in it this moment of vio-

lence.

The question with which the poem begins—how might the speaker and the addressee experience more love—would find an answer in ambivalence if it were not for the link to early childhood given in the poem's title as allusion to play. That the song is sung by a "playmate prince," or by the prince of play, recalls earlier modes of attachment. Incorporation's proximity to oral instincts invites, in good part, this return to early states of relating.

Written five years before "Das Lied des Spielprinzen," the language of Lasker-Schüler's 1912 novella *Mein Herz, Ein Liebesroman mit Bildern und wirklich lebenden Menschen* (*My Heart, a Novel of Love, with Pictures and Real, Living People*) insists upon the possibility of incorporation. *Mein Herz* is comprised primarily of letters addressed to Lasker-Schüler's ex-husband, Herwarth Walden, whom she had just recently divorced. Throughout the novella, we find narrations of eating and drinking that illuminate the importance of consumption (*Gesammelte Werke 2*: 369). The image of devouring is essential and recalls the manic response to mourning described by Freud. Freud explains that a response of mania entails the desire to devour objects (Freud 255). In one letter addressed to her ex-husband, Lasker-Schüler writes that she should be seen as comparable to a pineapple by a painter who wishes to paint her portrait and closes the description with a turn towards cannibalism:

Ihr wollt es nicht glauben, aber der Maler mit der ungeheuren Handschrift wird mir glauben, daß ich von der Ananas stamme. O, dieser berauschende, wilde Fruchtkopf mit dem Häuptlingsblattschmuck! Ich habe noch nie davon gegessen, nicht einmal genascht, aus Pietät, und dabei könnt ich meine pflanzliche Abkunft aufessen, wie ein Menschenfresser. (*Gesammelte Werke 2*: 362)

You won't believe it, but the painter with the terrifying handwriting will believe me, that I am descended from the pineapple. O, this intoxicating, wild head of fruit, the chieftan's ornamental bonnet! I have never eaten one, not once nibbled at it, because of my piety, and yet I could devour my vegetable ancestry, like a cannibal. (*Heart 20*)

She uses the word “*Abkunft*” (descent, lineage, or parentage) to discuss the pineapple. It is the plant or vegetative form of her parentage that could be eaten, a possibility then tied to the act of a cannibal, a “*Menschenfresser*.” There is thus a link drawn between inheritance or the familial and the question of incorporation. This inclusion of the familial may inevitably refer to loss, the deaths of family members recalled. Implicit, as well, in this moment is the speaker as object of consumption, her comparison to fruit signaling her own fantasy of being devoured or incorporated by the other. There is the wish that the other will follow the call to cannibalism by recognition of the speaker as object available for consumption. Additionally, when the speaker associates herself with exotic fruit described as intoxicating, she uses identification, in part, as lure.<sup>2</sup>

Though not explicit in this passage, it is crucial to note that in many sections of the novella, the loss of the relationship with Herwarth Walden, the addressee, is directly tied to the speaker’s experience of suffering. It was, in fact, commented that the novella was too heavily based on the author’s biography (Falkenberg 76). The fantasy of incorporating the lost loved object attends identification with acts of cannibalism. The novella incorporates the other; the majority of the epistles are addressed to the author’s ex-husband. In effect, through language, the text becomes a space that can devour or swallow up other objects, which are then contained or stored within.

Just three short sections after cannibalism is first introduced in the novella, the theme returns in another of the novella’s entries. In this example, the act of devouring is turned inwards. The speaker describes a type of self-encounter, one sustained in terms of manic jubilation:

Ich bin nun ganz auf meine Seele angewiesen, und habe mit Zagen meine Küste betreten. So viel Wildnis! Ich werde selbst von mir aufgefressen werden. Ich feiere blutige Götzenfeste, trage böse Tiermasken und tanze mit Menschenknochen, mit Euren Schenkeln. Ich muß Geduld haben. Ich habe Geduld mit mir. (*Gesammelte Werke 2*: 365)

I am now entirely dependent on my soul, and have tread upon my shores with fear. So much wilderness! I

shall be devoured by myself. I celebrate bloody pagan rites, wear the masks of evil animals, and dance with human bones, with your thighs. I must have patience. I have patience with myself. (*Heart 20*)

Evocations of Dionysian festivals or feasts follow, aligning the speaker with playful disposition of human body parts. A primitive world is traced here in which a belief in spirits and ghosts is at home. As in the poem, named after a prince who plays, here too, play becomes synonymous with acts of a brutal nature. The addressees—the letter is addressed both to her ex-husband and her friend Kurt (most likely her ex-husband’s travel companion at the time)—become objects of aggression. Their bodies are now simply fragments, pieces or remainders that become objects of play for the speaker.

The I of the text is alone, or rather, left alone, as though all others have departed. There follows the gesture toward making oneself into the other, whereupon a dissociative inclination appears. The self can be made other in the psyche that stores or retains the dead as other. The self can turn on itself in order to devour a self relation otherwise addressed as a suicidal urge. There is ecstasy in this moment of celebration that allows the speaker to enjoy the animalistic. The figure of manic intoxication arises. Perhaps the turn to the self is described as joyous because it marks the moment of having let go the objects that have been successfully mourned. These objects are not only the ones from which the speaker has detached herself, but also objects upon which the speaker can unleash aggression. There is also a turn towards the self as the one upon whom one can depend. There is the possibility of having patience with oneself. The subject becomes able to treat herself as other. The self can be judged and viewed, and, furthermore, acted upon without the presence of others. There is the fantasy, then, of incorporating oneself into oneself; perhaps celebration here stems from this possibility of ultimate return. At the close of the letter, the speaker states that she is herself, her only “immortal love.” The self alone can usurp the role that might be or was once played by others (*Heart 21*).

Lasker-Schüler insists on the possibility of turning towards the self as other. Beginning with her mother,

Lasker-Schüler's imaginings preserve a space for the unincorporated other; the self could become the "other" in an already familiar process. The writing subject who is inhabited by the dead may thus always be writing with the effects of ghosts or lost objects, the voice of the I becoming multiple. This question of multiplicity applies indeed to Else Lasker-Schüler, who took on the personalities of her invented characters, signing letters in their names and dressing herself in the costumes that she had assigned them. Identity is seen as plural with the haunted self too appearing as a plurality of identities. She claimed she had conversations with ghosts. In Lasker-Schüler's texts addressing or interrogating desire, the traces of losses cannot be erased. Instead, the urge or wish to ingest the other without thought of letting go, and the reciprocal desire for the loved other to do the same, is repeatedly presented. Desire is projected through the lens of loss and often includes the wish for a return to the symbiotic relation between mother and infant that can be reconstructed through processes of incorporation.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Jacques Derrida *The Work of Mourning*.

<sup>2</sup> The question of intoxication enters into a discussion of mourning. As Avital Ronell suggests, the user of the drug or elixir often turns toward intoxicants either to convene with or dismiss phantoms. The hallucinatory properties of drugs facilitate the emergence of the fantasized object. See: Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania* 5.

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## EX-CORPORATION: ON MALE BIRTH FANTASIES

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Between 1890 and 1933, male birth fantasies became a widespread phenomenon in European culture. One of the key examples of male birth fantasies is Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's "African" novel *Mafarka the Futurist*. The novel's protagonist, Mafarka, gives birth to a child by his will power and by drawing on diverse formations of knowledge, from alchemy to theories of evolution. In addition to the consideration given the psycho-historical, cultural, and scientific contexts of male birth fantasies in the avant-garde, the contribution reflects on sibling encryptment within the relationship to the mother as one more aspect of a span of genealogy one might term "Maternal Modernity."

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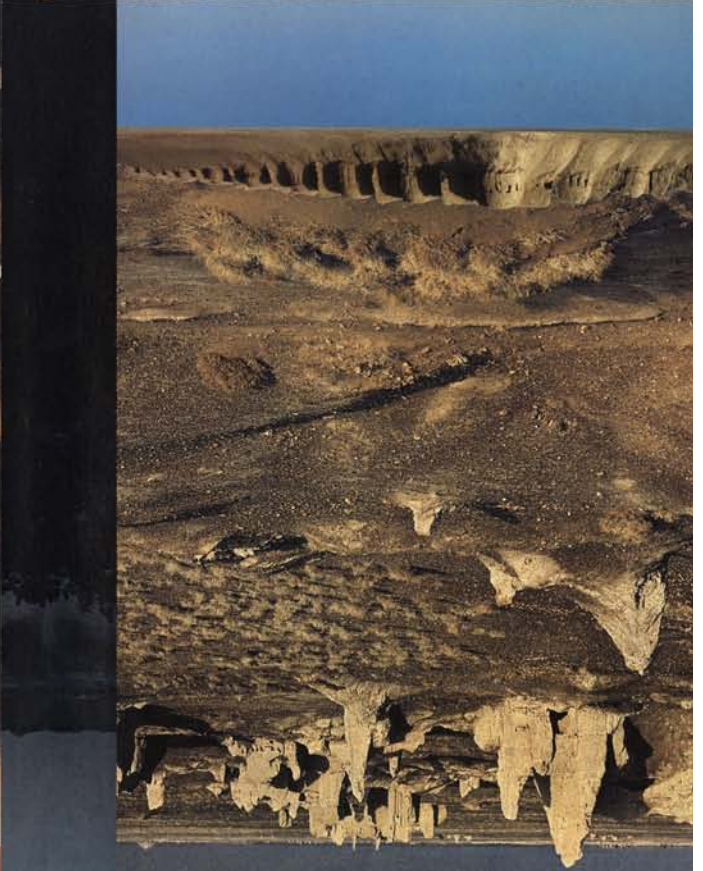
Before entering the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, class of Daniel Roth, in 2008, Adam Cmiel trained in various media in Bad Dürkheim, Hamburg, Mannheim, and Trier. He has participated in nine exhibitions since the onset of his studies in Karlsruhe.

Le fantasme du *male birth* se répand dans la culture européenne entre 1890 et 1933. Un exemple-clé du fantasme du *male birth* est le roman « africain » *Mafarka le Futuriste* de Filippo Tommaso Marinetti. Le protagoniste du roman, Mafarka, donne naissance à un enfant à travers sa volonté, mais aussi en faisant appel à diverses connaissances de l'alchimie jusqu'aux théories de l'évolution. En plus de considérer les contextes psycho-historique, culturel et scientifique du concept du *male birth* dans le cadre de l'avant-garde, cet article considère l'encodage de la fratrie à travers la relation à la mère comme un autre aspect de l'intervalle généalogique qu'on peut appeler « la modernité maternelle ».

Christine Kanz est professeur de littérature allemande à l'Université Ghent en Belgique. Son article se rapporte à son livre *Maternale. Moderne. Männliche Gebärdphantasien zwischen Kultur und Wissenschaft, 1890-1933*, publié en 2009. Elle est éditrice de plusieurs collections et auteur d'un autre livre sur Ingeborg Bachmann, ainsi que de nombreux articles et de nombreux comptes-rendus dans le domaine des études interdisciplinaires.

Avant de s'inscrire à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Karlsruhe sous la direction de Daniel Roth en 2008, Adam Cmiel poursuit diverses études à Bad Dürkheim, à Hamburg, à Mannheim et à Trier. Après le début de ses études à Karlsruhe, il prend part à neuf expositions.





In Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's "African" novel *Mafarka il futurista* (*Mafarka the Futurist*), male omnipotence is fortified by male creativity; or rather, male omnipotence should be supported by a certain kind of male creativity. Mafarka, the protagonist of the novel (which was first published in French in 1909), is an Egyptian dictator who commands thousands of black prisoners. At the same time, he alone in the text gives birth to a child. This creative, maternal act, then, cannot be described as only a triumph over the senses and nature in general. The birth of Gazourmah, who is at once Mafarka's son and a new futuristic superhuman being, ultimately lets Mafarka himself become superfluous. Although the super baby's face has the features of a black male, Mafarka, whose own "face was the colour of beautiful terra-cottas" (8) and who scorns and humiliates black people, finally adores his son as a deity.

*Mafarka il futurista* is set in Egypt, a deeply ambiguous Egypt. Take, for instance, the double-image of Mafarka as a Muslim, on the one hand, and as an Ancient Egyptian, on the other hand. Or consider the double-image of Mafarka as a wild, handsome, erotic Arab warrior and, at the same time, as a caring mother. Clearly, Mafarka is fascinated by femininity and maternity in a negative, but also in a positive, sense. He is depicted as an aggressive womanizer, whose exaggerated sexual drive, on many occasions, turns into sadistic violence. However, he is also characterized as motherly, as having maternal feelings towards his younger brother, as well as towards his newborn son. Mafarka is filled through and through with femininity. The image in the foreground of the modern athlete, who is cruel and omnipotent, is undermined behind that scene by traditional female attributes based on emotions, the body, and the senses.

The very introduction to *Mafarka il futurista* culminates in a sort of male birth manifesto, according to which "men [...] give birth prodigiously" and "the mind of man is an unpractised ovary [...]" (3). But at first Marinetti exhorts his "futurist brothers" to "scorn woman" (1). The "brothers" should "fight the gluttony of the heart, the surrender of parted lips" (2). In the same vein, Mafarka opposes monogamy, fearing the love for and of a single woman: "I want to conquer the tyranny of love," he declares, "the obsession with the one and

only woman, the strong Romantic moonlight bathing the front of the Brothel" (2). His "brothers" should not be like "miserable sons of the vulva" who "strangle the roaring Future and incalculable Destiny of man" (3).

Mafarka's mysteriously produced child embodies the significance of male birth fantasies in the context of the early twentieth century avant-garde. Gazourmah not only has a black face, but also, and perhaps even more striking, Gazourmah is a machine—an airplane, to be precise. Gazourmah spreads the wings of an airplane, which enable him to produce "total music" (205), music made from factory noise or the sounds of traffic.<sup>1</sup> The standard reception of the novel sees the figure of Gazourmah as the embodiment of Nietzschean ideas of the *Übermensch*. Certainly, the fascination with airplanes, machines, speed, energy, space and noise, around 1900, was a key trope of the European avant-garde, yet also an utterly male affair. But there are, I believe, further aspects to the crisis of the modern Western male subject, and the role of the Futurists therein, that cannot solely be accounted for within the conventional framework of a European *history of ideas*, but rather, are infused with ambiguities generated by dichotomies, such as art/science, man/woman, nature/technics, and last but not least, by the colonial encounter.

While these elements can be easily recognized as stemming from the cultural archive of early twentieth century Europe, their combination with male birth seems unusual. Yet upon closer inspection, male birth fantasies are actually quite common in the culture of the time. They are present, for instance, in the psychoanalytical construct of male "envy of pregnancy," a term coined by psychoanalyst Karen Horney (365), and that was thought of as a parallel alternative to Freud's identification of female "penis envy."<sup>2</sup> Male birth fantasies also remind us of the phenomenon of male child bed (*couvade*), as described by the philologist Johann Jakob Bachofen and later anthropologists. Male birth fantasies also figure in texts by Franz Werfel, Frank Wedekind, Else Lasker-Schüler, Ernst Weiß, Ernst Jünger, and Franz Kafka. In film, we find Rotwang, the mad scientist in Fritz Lang's and Thea von Harbou's *Metropolis* (1927), devising a technology that 'gives birth' to a female double within the blank of a robot. In Robert Wiene's *Das*



*Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* 1919), Cesare is, if not born to, at least adopted by Caligari. Birth fantasies/male motherhood fantasies are also discernible in sculptural work; for instance, Max Beckman's Adam and Eve revalorizes the Genesis account of Adam as the creator of Eve, by depicting Adam as Eve's male mother. Jacob Epstein's 1915 *The Rock Drill*, identified as "a living entity"<sup>3</sup> by the artist himself, shows an embryo in its belly, while in Erwin Blumenfeld's *Self Portrait*, a man gives birth to a woman, or at least, to a picture of a woman. Finally, we can also discern male birth fantasies in the Mannequins or Wax-dolls used by the Surrealists to figure as male mother or as male Madonna with child (e.g. Lucien Vogel with a mannequin puppet or Hans Bellmer with his doll), and similar fantasies in some paintings, especially by Umberto Boccioni.

### Male Birth as Analogy of Art Production

Given Mafarka's blatantly racist views, it is certainly odd that the lighter-skinned Mafarka gives birth to a

son whose face is black. Indeed, in a moment of post-partum depression, Mafarka considers his own creation a failure. Gazourmah disturbingly resembles his black prisoners more than himself, thus casting doubt on Mafarka's ability "to give [his son's] face the ideal harmony" (186). But what is the significance of the artist's desire to project the alienation from his work onto the image of a bastardized, black child? The face is modeled after African masks, which were becoming increasingly available and valuable in the European art market. Consider, for example, the front cover of Carl Einstein's 1915 monograph *Negro Sculpture*, a text that was extremely influential at the time. In fact, the original cover image selected for Einstein's book matches the description Mafarka gives of his son: "I was able to design your wide almond eyes, your straight nose with its big mobile nostrils, your thick, insolent lips and broad jaw!" (186). Like Einstein's African sculptures, Gazourmah is formed out of an amorphous black mass. And just as Africans, according to Einstein, adore their sculpture-like deities, Mafarka ultimately adores his own work, his son.

There are other parallels, too. Carl Einstein, as is well known, valorized the potency of the African art object over the beholder's weakness and insignificance. Much in the same vein, Mafarka celebrates the annihilation of the artist-subject in favor of a greater force embodied by Gazourmah. "The oldest of us is thirty," Marinetti says in one of his manifestos, "so we have at least a decade for finishing our work. When we are forty, other younger and stronger men will probably throw us in the wastebasket like useless manuscripts—we want it to happen!" (Marinetti, "Founding" 43). How does this half-male, half-female form of creativity support male omnipotence? And why are black stereotypes so important in mediating between male omnipotence, motherhood, and artistic creativity?

One main reason for Marinetti's paradoxical appropriation of maternity as a source for a new form of creativity lies in the specific material itself that is required for this superhuman act: an organic, amorphous material outside of the tradition-laden Western canon, or in short, a virgin material. Thus, it is no surprise that Mafarka, creator of the dead female slime and pulp, gains inspiration from a mass of undifferentiated black females. Af-



rica becomes the (muse-like) material that will provide Mafarka with the power to form the ultimate sculpture: a sculpture with “negroid” (23: “negress’s”) features.

There is an uncanny parallel between Marinetti’s use of the traditional triangulation ‘mass—fluidity—femininity’ (and here also: ‘blackness’) and Klaus Theweleit’s analysis of *Freikorps* constructions of femininity. Male bodies, Theweleit famously suggested in his book on male phantasies, become geometric because the soldiers’ armored bodies have to be understood as a defense against boundlessness and flood, which is traditionally linked to femaleness. In much the same way, Mafarka’s creations take shape out of the fluidity of black female bodies as a protection against ‘femininity.’

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said deduces the cultural crisis of modernity and its deep ambiguity from the modern artist’s colonial experience. The artist’s quest for a new formal language, Said claims, led him to draw on elements from both his own culture and that of the Other, a strategy Said calls “new inclusiveness” (189). Hence, much like Said’s torn modern artist, Mafarka creates a new being from the mass of despised black females. In the end, like the Western artist, Mafarka can relate to both cultures only with a mixture of “familiarity and distance”; he is at home in neither, never developing “a sense of their separate sovereignty.”<sup>4</sup> Ambiguities such as these illustrate that the modern

project of cementing male autonomy can never be fully completed.

In the colonial contact zone—probably more so than in the heart of *Freikorps* Germany—there is no end to the project of fortifying the male. Between bronze and black, between Egypt and Sudan, black and white, the abject female never re-ally disappears. That the female can never be totally erased takes a specific form for Mafarka, who cannot let go of his beloved deceased mother. This love relation is so powerful and symbiotic that its constitutive ambivalence causes anxiety.

#### The Presence of the Past (Golem, Pygmalion, Prometheus and Alchemy)

One can question this text’s futuristic impulse by demonstrating the presence of the past within it. This persistence of the past is inherent in the very ambiguity of modernism, as Walter Benjamin demonstrated throughout his work. Man’s “desire” to give birth to children is as old as mankind itself. As noted, the creation of “Man,”<sup>5</sup> as described in Genesis 2:7, can be read as a male birth fantasy while the gods Kronos, Zeus, Prometheus, and Pygmalion are known to have conceived the fantasy into reality.

That the extraction of matter from dead bodies of black women provides the inspiration for the creation of

black-faced Gazourmah recalls the Jewish legend of the Golem. According to this legend, the Golem is a product of mother Earth and the Divine Spirit turned creative word. It is especially during the twentieth century that the Golem myth resurfaced in a number of texts and films, including Gustav Meyrink's *Golem*-novel and Paul Wegener's silent movies featuring the *Golem*. The Golem is linked to motherless birth, to unformed mass, or even is referred to as embryo (Huet 243). He comes to life through the word and proves, in modern incarnation, a giant who kills his own creator—again like Gazourmah, who finally kills Mafarka, his mother-father.

*Passatismo*, the obsession with things past, was for Marinetti the worst insult. Instead, he aimed for an “unwritten beginning” that would free him from the authority of all literary predecessors. Marinetti was intent on developing a new kind of poetics, without traditional tropes. For Marinetti, ‘birth’—both as a metaphor and as a metonymy—belongs to the male sphere. Birth is often used as a traditional metaphor for the process of writing, and as such, it opposes woman to man as the producer of the work of art. Hence, in evoking this gender stereotype, Marinetti did not overcome *passatismo* at all. At the same time, ‘birth’ is a matriarchal trope, standing for a primary female domain. And so, as Mafarka's desire to create a new world without the help of the ‘vulva’ inevitably entails men capable of giving birth to children, Gazourmah's birth must be read literally, as enacting a shift toward the male sphere that ruptures what historically has been a biologically argued metonymic chain: birth—woman—domestic sphere—family.

Clearly, a re-writing of the female trope “birth” is only possible by a return to the past. Marinetti networks a variety of traditional images of motherless birth within the history of science, specifically, the history of alchemy as precursor to chemistry. Marinetti also invokes the theory of evolution, while (fictionally) foregrounding modern bioengineering methods. Considering Gazourmah's superhuman or, if you will, post-human qualities, one is struck by two extraordinary features: his oversized male sexual organ and the airplane wings attached

to his body. Both pieces of bodily armature render him especially fit for the male technological future Mafarka envisions. But this idea of acquired bodily modifications was actually not so completely out of order at the time—at least not when viewed from a certain evolutionary biologist's standpoint, namely that of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1744-1829).<sup>6</sup>

In his *Zoological Philosophy* (which, though first published in 1809, was most influential around 1900), Lamarck formulated two new evolutionary rules, which were based on the following assumptions:

Nature has produced all the species of animals in succession, beginning with the most imperfect or simplest, and ending her work with the most perfect, so as to create a gradually increasing complexity in their organization; [...] and every species has derived from its environment the habits that we find in it and the structural modifications which observation shows us. (126)<sup>7</sup>



Lamarck's first law states that often used organs will "gradually" strengthen, "develop," and be "enlarged" while disused organs will weaken and shrink in the course of time, "and progressively diminish [their] functional capacity, until [they] finally disappear"(113).<sup>8</sup> The second law states that these acquired characteristics will be "preserved by reproduction to new individuals [...]" (113),<sup>9</sup> meaning: it states the inheritance of acquired characteristics. If necessary, certain new organs would be present immediately after birth—just so as to fit the needs of the individual in his or her specific environment, "as a result of efforts" (108).<sup>10</sup> And so, as a result of Mafarka's efforts, Gazourmah is endowed with acquired characteristics, in this case airplane wings, which are necessary for living in a futurist world.

But Gazourmah also shares other features with the Lamarckian individual, such as being the product of a union of his father and the sun. In one scene of the novel, for instance, she-Mafarka lies stretched out on a lawn (131). Allowing herself to be penetrated by the rays of the he-sun, she-Mafarka seems to confirm Lamarck's view that the sun's light is the source of all life.<sup>11</sup> Marinetti's text on "Multiplied Man and the Reign of [the...] Machine" (which became part of his later infamous text *From War, the World's Only Hygiene*, 1911-1915) actually describes the superman model of the future by explicitly referring to Lamarck:

It is certain that if we grant the truth of Lamarck's transformational hypothesis we must admit that we look for the creation of a nonhuman type [...] We believe in the possibility of an incalculable number of human transformations, and without a smile we declare that wings are asleep in the flesh of man. [...] This nonhuman and mechanical being, constructed for an omnipresent velocity, [...] will be endowed with surprising organs: organs adapted to the needs of a world of ceaseless shocks. From now on we can foresee a bodily development in the form of a prow from the outward swell of the breastbone, which will be the more marked the better an aviator the man of the future becomes. (91)

In the same text, Marinetti also declares that the new futurist human being will be the fruit of the male *will*<sup>12</sup>,





which revalorizes, as much as it contradicts, the earlier inclusion of Lamarckian evolutionary development.<sup>13</sup>

### Conclusion: Mother's Mourning and Will

This turn to the will is another manifestation of ambivalence—towards technology, Woman, and the Maternal. Man has to bring everything under his will power. But the male *will* so often invoked by Marinetti cannot be the will of the male subject alone. In *Mafarka il futurista*, it is Mafarka's late mother's painful mourning over her other son, Mafarka's late little brother Magamal, that triggers and enforces Mafarka's reproductive act, and thus the creation of the new futurist human being. Gazourmah is created according to his late mother's will or testament, which Mafarka internalized. Before and after Gazourmah's birth, Mafarka's mother appears as a sort of *Fata Morgana* to mother-Mafarka (34, 193). His dead mother talks to him—grieving over his late little brother. Finally, Mafarka believes that she gives him the order to give up his life for his son, the son that was created by her order and will. His potential motherliness fades away under the eyes of his mother and becomes a valuable good, taken over by his own mother. In sum, it is his mother who is the dominant figure throughout his life unto death.

Following Laurence Rickels' mourning-and-incorporation-theory, there must have been a dead and not yet or not adequately mourned sibling of the author himself behind the incorporated body and birth in this text.<sup>14</sup> Already a reading on the fictional level (still following Rickels' main idea) could lead to a different interpretation: from this perspective it would not only be the mother, but also his dead little brother Magamal, whom Mafarka could not mourn adequately. The mother then would have shared her part in this unconscious mourning:

The mother is always in a position to hide secret treasure in her child's body which she has trained, arranged, and mapped out; she can thus deposit the unmourned corpse of one of her children in the body of another little one who survives. The mourning that never took place is covertly and ambiguously entrusted to a surviving child who must carry a dead sibling and







### mourn in the mother's place. (11)

Is the birth of Mafarka's son the result of an ex-corporation? Is his son's body the formerly incorporated "unmourned corpse" of his late little brother, an encrypted result of aberrant mourning, and thus the young *Übermensch* of the future a remnant of the past?

A *full* adaptation of Rickels' psychoanalytic-autobiographical mourning-model would require looking for a possibly inadequately mourned sibling of the *author* himself.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, a closer look at Marinetti's biography would be necessary. Indeed, Marinetti did lose a brother two years his senior, who died shortly after Marinetti commenced his study of law in Pavia and Geneva. Marinetti then immediately gave up his studies and focused on his own preference: he began writing.<sup>16</sup> Günter Berghaus insists on the imminent influence of this family disaster on the onset of Marinetti's writing, stressing that brother Leone's death was also important enough to be included in Marinetti's autobiographical text "Wonderful Milan—Traditional and Futuristic": "My brother Leone, beautiful boy of genius, [...] stopped in his tracks [...] by heart disease [...] my inconsolable mother spent her life weeping at his tomb stone at Cimitero Monumentale" (58).<sup>17</sup>

It is key to Rickels' theory of unmourning that the encrypted loss not so much contradicts as virally replicates and dismantles the unicity of thematic readings of works of mourning (whether Oedipal or pre-Oedipal in focus). Haunting is always multiple occupancy. In the *Mafarka* novel, Magamal's death as unacknowledged is carried forward as the wish to give birth, which the loss of the mother conceives. It is not Magamal, but the undead mother who is the identifiable remnant in the text, haunting Mafarka day and night. Thus, in my reading of Marinetti's novel, but also of texts by Kafka and selected German authors of that time,<sup>18</sup> it is the dead mother who carries the weight of those who never really disappear.<sup>19</sup> Mafarka cannot let his dead mother go; the abject female can never be totally erased, and the modern project of cementing male omnipotence can never be fully completed. The idealization of motherhood and maternity is the key feature of Cultural Modernism. It finds its most cogent expression in male birth fantasies

and, implicit in these fantasies, in the rejection of fatherhood. What is more, Mafarka's ambiguous relationship to his 'product,' Gazourmah, the machine man who is half-human half-airplane, even suggests that the Futurists' technophilia—destined to produce new and improved overmen—is not free of fear. The secret of birth, otherwise the exclusive property of women, the organic, material process that takes place inside, gives way to a masculinist crypto-technology of the dead (to which, according to Rickels, actual mothers are, in fact, given to contribute over their dead children). Male birth fantasies represent the turn toward the organic that must be brought under control. In playing on a variety of traditional images of motherless birth (for example, the construction of an artificial womb; Marinetti, *Mafarka* 151), Marinetti foreshadows modern technologies of reproduction, in which, by the looks of it, the perennial fantasy attributed to men will cease to be fiction.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This suggests a parallel with Luigi Russolo's *Arte dei rumori* and the Futurist fascination with noise and machines.

<sup>2</sup> See Sigmund Freud, *Das Medusenhaupt* 47.

<sup>3</sup> See Arnold Lionel Haskell and Jacob Epstein 42.

<sup>4</sup> According to Said, members of a colonizing nation/culture see and feel the other/the abject culture/nation, "with a combination of familiarity and distance, but never with a sense of their [the different cultures'] separate sovereignty" (xxi).

<sup>5</sup> See "Das 1. Buch Mose"/"Genesis" 2:7, 6.

<sup>6</sup> It flourished after having been published as a German "Volksausgabe," or folk's edition, in 1909, furnished with an introduction by famous Ernst Haeckel (1834–1919) who did his best to direct general attention to this in his view important evolution model. Nowadays, it seems, this theory that had been regarded for so long as containing remarkable errors, has become interesting again after genetic research has acknowledged a certain truth in epigenetic theory and in the hereditary of acquired characteristics or even acquired *genetic* modifications.

<sup>7</sup> Thus, all in all he assumes “that by the influence of environment on habit, and thereafter by that of habit on the state of the parts and even on organization of any animal may undergo modifications [...]” (Lamarck 127).

<sup>8</sup> “FIRST LAW. In every animal which has not passed the limit of its development, a more frequent and continuous use of any organ gradually strengthens, develops and enlarges that organ, and gives it a power proportional to the length of time it has been so used; while the permanent disuse of any organ imperceptibly weakens and deteriorates it, and progressively diminishes its functional capacity, until it finally disappears” (Lamarck 113).

<sup>9</sup> “SECOND LAW. All the acquisitions or losses wrought by nature on individuals, through the influence of the environment in which their race has long be placed, and hence through the influence of the predominant use or permanent disuse of any organ; all these are preserved by reproduction to the new individuals which arise, provided that the acquired modifications are common to both sexes, or at least to the *individuals which produce the young*” (Lamarck 113, emphasis mine).

<sup>10</sup> “We shall shortly see [...], that new needs which establish a necessity for some part really bring about the existence of that part, *as a result of efforts*” (Lamarck 108, emphasis mine).

<sup>11</sup> See Wolfgang Lefèvre 52.

<sup>12</sup> “On the day when man will be able to externalize his will and make it into a huge invisible arm, Dream and Desire, which are empty words today, will master and reign over space and time” (Marinetti, “Multiplied” 91).

<sup>13</sup> Hal Foster suggested a different reading of this contradiction: “For Marinetti the futurist subject must accelerate this process, speed this evolution, for only then might man ‘be endowed with surprising organs: organs adapted to the needs of a world of ceaseless shocks’ [...]” (122).

<sup>14</sup> See Laurence A. Rickels: *Aberrations of Mourning: Writing on German Crypts*.

<sup>15</sup> This statement references a personal conversation

with Rickels following my public talk at the University of California, Santa Barbara, February 20, 2007 on which this paper is based.

<sup>16</sup> See Luce Marinetti Barbi, “Reminiscences of my Father” 52.

<sup>17</sup> My translation, from the Italian original: “La grande Milano tradizionale e futurista”: “Mio fratello Leone bel ragazzo geniale [...] frenato [...] da malattia di cuore [...] Mia madre Amalia inconsolabile viveva piangendo fra la sua tomba al Cimitero Monumentale [...]”

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. my Kafka interpretation in Christine Kanz, *Maternale Moderne* 90ff.

<sup>19</sup> An interpretation of Kafka’s texts by Rickels also focusing on the birth theme might add plausibility to the importance of the mother figure—in spite of the fact that Kafka also had an unmourned late brother. Rickels’ reading implies a male pregnancy in Kafka’s text *The Judgement*. Here it is Georg who gave birth to the “friend”: “The ‘birth’ Kafka achieves with the writing of *The Judgement* is conveyed within the story as Georg’s creation of a phantom friend also to the extent that both deliveries circumvent while holding the mother’s missing place. The phantom friend embodies ‘the connection between father and son,’ Kafka writes in his own exegesis of the story. This embodied connection is shadowed by the post—the friend is phantom precisely to the extent that he is exclusively a letter-writing friend—just as it embodies the loss between father and son, the two-year-old loss of the mother” (258). Moreover, also Georg’s father would have participated in this pregnancy, at least this is how Kafka’s comment concerning the “birth” of the “story” and regarding “the common ground” between father and son could also be read: Their biggest common ground or hidden bond (“ihre größte Gemeinsamkeit”) the text says, is their connection (“Verbindung”) (Kafka, *Tagebücher* 491, my translation). It must be a shared production or even their child on what is commented here—at least this is suggested by the biological hint to the blood ties by Kafka himself: It is the friend that is, one can read in his diary notes, who belongs to the blood circle surrounding father and son (“Blutkreis, der sich um Vater und Sohn zieht”) and to which Georg’s bride will never get access

(Kafka, *Tagebücher* 492, my translation).

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## KANT CRISIS

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This study approaches the last days of Immanuel Kant through the lens of his contemporary biographers and other correspondents. Among the latter, Kant's brother and, subsequently, his brother's family provide a symptomatic reflection upon Kant's management of his genealogy and his legacy. Yet behind this body of work is another corpus, one which embodies maternal and paternal legacies that are not readily subsumed by Oedipus or Kant's philosophy. This work (of art) is Kant's own body or corpus, which he painstakingly maintained and which provided a case study for his reflections on preventive medicine in *The Conflict of the Faculties*.

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Cet article est une analyse des derniers jours d'Immanuel Kant à travers ses biographes contemporains, ainsi qu'à travers d'autres correspondants, parmi lesquels le frère de Kant, dont la famille fournit une réflexion symptomatique de sa gestion de son héritage du passé, ainsi que celui de l'avenir. Cependant, à l'arrière de ce corpus il y en a un autre. La philosophie d'Édipe ou même celle de Kant ne subsume pas facilement ce deuxième corpus qui incarne l'héritage de sa mère, ainsi que celui de son père. Cette œuvre (d'art) représente le corpus, son propre corps, conservé méticuleusement et utilisé pour réfléchir aux remèdes préventifs dans *Conflit de facultés*.

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Kant: or cant as intelligible character.  
—Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols (Götzen-Dämmerung)*

Kant biographies tend to begin with the issue of deregulated spelling of the philosopher's last name.<sup>1</sup> And yet the variation on his name seems to have been issued during the last years of Kant's life, a period of preparation for the end, which was, however, a long time coming. According to his first biographer, Ludwig Ernst Borowski, whose account Kant authorized and corrected himself, the family name originally began with the letter "C" (Gross et al. 12n1). His grandfather emigrated from Scotland and settled in the Prussian-Lithuanian city of Tilsit, as Kant recalls in a letter to the Jacob Axelson Lindblom dated 13 October 1797 (*Philosophical Correspondence* 237). Subsequent research into this claim, by Ernst Cassirer among others, casts doubt on this genealogy. Kant's great-grandfather was an innkeeper in Werden, near Heydekrug. His son Hans learned harness making and later settled in Memel, contrary to Kant's recollection. There Kant's great-grandfather married, and Kant's father was born. Johann Georg left his father in Memel and set out for Königsberg, where he married Anna Regina Reuter (Vorländer 1-2).

If Kant's father spoke of his ancestors as being of Scottish descent, then Kant was called upon to recall this in response to the aforementioned letter from Lindblom, a Swedish bishop. While Kant appreciates the bishop's research into his family history, he must, in the end, point out that it will prove useless for both him and anyone else. As he goes on to explain, he has known for some time now that his grandfather came from Scotland and died in Tilsit. To this statement he adds the footnote: "My father died in Königsberg, with me" (*Philosophical Correspondence* 237). Why the need for a footnote here, one might ask. For his part, he can close the issue of his genealogy in one sentence or verdict: "My family tree is completely closed off to me as I am single" (*Philosophical Correspondence* 237, translation modified). A dash introduces the final portion of Kant's genealogy. "So much for my origin, which your genealogical chart traces back to honest peasants in the land of the Ostrogoths (for which I feel honored) down to my father

(I think you must mean my grandfather)" (*Philosophical Correspondence* 237). The grounding of this discussion in the father's death, in his role as eye witness to this death, prompts more counter testimony, this time not in a note, but in the equally internalized mode of parenthesis. Where Lindblom speaks of Kant's father, it should be his grandfather instead. Kant then politely declines the entreaty implied in the bishop's letter. He recognizes the bishop's humanitarian interest in calling on him to support alleged relatives. Kant then recounts that he happened to receive another letter at the same time as Lindblom's. This correspondent provided a similar account of his descent and introduced himself as his "cousin." He wanted to borrow money—eight or ten thousand thalers—but only for a few years, until he could attain happiness. Tracing the letter back to its place and date of origin, Kant enters it into evidence. He informs bishop Lindblom that he cannot honor his or other requests because his estate shall go to his closest relatives.

Kant was the oldest surviving child in his family. An older sister was listed in the family album. His three younger sisters resided in Königsberg. They were apparently uneducated and signed their names with an "X." In the letter to Lindblom, Kant writes of his living sister, the six children of his late sister, and his younger brother, Johann Heinrich Kant, who has four children of his own, one of whom is recently married. Considering these relations, the demands of his alleged "cousin" as well as requests by bishop Lindblom on behalf of other alleged relatives, cannot be recognized. An editor's note to an English translation of this letter adds the following: "In a draft of this letter, Kant adds a eulogy to his parents who, while leaving him no fortune, nor any debts, managed to give him such an excellent moral education that he is filled with gratitude whenever he thinks of them" (*Correspondence* 527). In place of the eulogy, Kant sends, instead, the curious footnote announcing his presence at his father's death in Königsberg.

With all the talk of fathers, grandfathers, relatives on his father's side, his brother's son, and so on, mention of Kant's mother is conspicuously absent. While he credits his parents with his moral education, it was his mother who was first and foremost his educator. She would of-



ten take her “Manelchen” into the country, teaching him about the properties of nature and plant life, as well as what she knew of the makeup of the heavens. Recalling such field trips to Jachmann, Kant is reported to have said that she “planted and nourished,” in Kant, the “first seed of the Good” and “opened” his “heart to the impressions of nature;” she was the first to “awaken and expand” in him *his* ideas and “her lessons have exerted an ongoing healing influence” on his life (Vorländer 4-5).<sup>2</sup> Frau Kant was relatively educated for her time, concludes Kant scholar and biographer Vorländer from her entries into the family album, especially compared to other women in Kant’s life (5). From his mother, Kant believed he also inherited his lineament, as well as his physical constitution, including an inflected chest. According to the authorized Borowski biography, Kant’s weak chest discouraged him from pursuing a career as a pastor, one his brother would ultimately take up.

Kant seldom wrote of his family and wrote perhaps even less frequently to his family. There is a lengthy one-sided correspondence initiated repeatedly by his brother Johann Heinrich. Not until the correspondence about his family name toward the end of his life did Kant fully enter into the epistolary exchange with his brother. Kant had at least two legacies to dispose of at the end of his life. There was the maternal legacy he embodied 1) as a constitutionally weak, yet enduring physical being, and 2) as spirit disposed to melancholic hypochondria, yet capable of overcoming it through the diversion or dissociation of thought. The maternal gift of thought, bound up with the implanted seed of the Good (or the good object), was mediated by the body of its mediation, comparable to a machine, in the close quarters of finitude and psychic disturbance. Then there was the paternal legacy attached to the name and the surviving line. The younger brother, who followed this line more closely than did Kant, indeed as Kant’s substitute, entertained a one-sided or ghostly correspondence course with the great outsider, who nearly never replied. Toward the end of his life, Kant replied to his brother in the course of overseeing the payment of his dues to the family line. But then Kant sent back the patronymic as a detachable English word. One “cant” would not have delivered his name from its already existing proximity to “Kante” or



“edge.” The other “cant” speaks the jargon of the underworld or of other professional bodies. Sometimes “cant” is the displeasing, often whining tone in which words are spoken, which as projection of estrangement onto an in-group, brings us back to the cryptology of jargon. Inasmuch as the guild cited is Scottish, Kant detaches the body he signs not only from the name of his father, but also from a certain philosophical lineage. Doesn’t he summon its locale or proximity only to announce he “can’t” partake?

In a letter dated 1 March 1763, which begins “My Brother!,” Johann Heinrich Kant implores his sibling, Immanuel Kant, to write back:

If it is not at all possible to receive a response from you, I will soon have to do as Gellert did with his lazy friend. Should this letter be as fortunate as its predecessors, next time I want to draft a reply to myself on your behalf. You would then merely have to sign your name and return it. I couldn’t make it any easier. (*Gesammelte Schriften* 10: 40)

For the time being, however, Johann requests that Kant pay more attention, as Johann has a pressing concern that will suffer no delay. One of Johann’s pupils will be visiting Königsberg and needs a place to stay.

I cannot but highly recommend this promising young fellow, the first student I taught. He will build upon the foundation I provided by attending your lectures. In particular he especially wishes to further his knowledge in your company [. . .] might it be possible for him to stay with you and dine with you? [. . .] We await your decision about this in the coming mail [. . .] (*Gesammelte Schriften* 10: 40).

There is no record of Kant’s reply. Twelve years later, Johann writes that he has become deputy rector of the school in Mietau and apologizes for not having sent the news earlier (13 May 1775). This negligence is due, in part, to mitigating circumstances. “I have now made the most important change of my life: I married.” He writes of his new bride that while she has “a great deal of outer beauty and a loving character,” she lacks “*Vermögen*,” in other words: money, means, or ability. “Yet I still chose her,” he continues, “purely out of love, and hope that at her side I will get through all the obstacles

and dangers of life, satisfied and happy.” Johann then turns his attention to Kant’s body, giving him a word of advice. “My dearest brother, you must seek serenity and peace of mind in the distractions of company. You must entrust your sickly body to the hired care of strangers. [. . .] As old age approaches and brings its burdens, they are lightened by the most loving care.” Take his situation, for example: “I am more fortunate than you, my brother. Allow yourself to be converted by my example. The single life/celibacy has its comforts, as long as one is young. But with age, one must be married or otherwise acquiesce to a morose, melancholy life.” Johann sends his regards to their sisters and asks for a truly detailed account of Kant’s situation. In addition, Johann pledges to write more often, suggesting perhaps that Kant do the same.

A postscript, the first in a series, is affixed to this letter. It is written by Johann’s wife, Maria:

You will take me to be a bold woman because I dare to write a man, whom I do not yet know personally. You alone are the brother of my husband and hence my brother; this is my justification. Give me, at least in writing, the recognition that you wish to honor me with the name of a sister. The tender love I devote to my husband also makes the most ardent friendship toward you a pleasant duty. I shall never stop being your most devoted sister. (*Gesammelte Schriften* 10: 180)

On 16 August of the same year, Johann writes again, asking Kant to look after the young man who is delivering this letter. He then addresses marriage. “I have not come to regret my decision to marry.” He suggests that his brother come visit for a few weeks, so he can see the happy couple, whose example should not threaten the “hardened bachelor” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 10: 184).

Although Kant never strayed far from Königsberg, it was not for lack of opportunity. He had ample funds for travel, and as early as 1759, he was offered a professorship of philosophy, his first, at Erlangen. Five years later, a professorship of poetry in Berlin was offered, but he declined as well. It wasn’t his area. Kant never made the trip to see his brother and wife, and in a letter from 21 January 1776, Johann begins by calling attention to this. “It just is not right. You would have found a loving

brother here and a sister-in-law who wishes to meet you [. . .].” Maria gave birth to a daughter, Amalia Charlotta.<sup>3</sup> “I delegated a godfather to stand in on your behalf so you could be entered in the church register.” He requests that his brother love his niece and conveys his wife’s desire to visit relatives in Königsberg. He sends her love and gives his best to their relatives, the Richters, and his sisters. “Write soon, it would probably only cost you a quarter hour, and it would not be wasted” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 10: 189). Again, Kant does not reply.

In early 1778, another courier arrives with a letter from Johann dated 4 January 1778. This messenger is en route to Berlin to study surgery. “It is very pleasing,” writes Johann, “that, free of postage, I can remind you that your brother is still alive and will receive news of you and his relatives after a period of three years.” In parenthesis, Johann impatiently hopes that Kant will mail him a letter soon. “Now then,” he writes, “what are you up to? What is the state of your health? Your peace of mind? Your entire situation? Miatou extended its arms to you three years ago. Was it patriotism? Or what was it that caused you not to want to visit?” Johann inquires about their sisters and his former foster parents, Aunt and Uncle Richter. If only Kant would send news of himself and their relatives, Johann would be as pleased as “a young student, who, plagued by creditors, has just received some money” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 10: 221).

A few years later, we learn of a gift from Kant to his sister-in-law, one that circumvents his brother, who nonetheless remains grateful and for good reason, as it will continue to be a topic of conversation in the years to come. In a letter to Kant dated 10 September 1782, Johann begins with a word of thanks on behalf of Maria. She was just delighted to receive the book he sent on household management and plans to use it to “become a quite valiant farmer.” Johann explains that he has changed careers. No longer a teacher, he is now a preacher and a farmer. He continues to live happily with his wife and their children, “two cheerful, spirited girls, Charlotte and Minna, and then in place of our Eduard, whom we lost a year ago, a fresh Friedrich Wilhelm, who has almost reached his first year.” Their current situation updated, Johann inquires about his brother’s well-being



and “literary activity,” Aunt and Uncle Richter, and their sisters. Again, Johann beseeches his brother to respond to his letters. Maria appends a postscript, thanking Kant for the book. She intends to use it to transform herself into “a professor of home economics.” Maria asks him to “love a sister-in-law, who without hope of ever embracing you in person, dedicates her heart to you.” Her daughters commend their uncle and would gladly, were it possible, “rush over to kiss his hand.” Her son is also a good boy, “who should someday honor your name” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 10: 287). Kant’s nieces and nephew would attempt to correspond with their uncle in the coming years.

Johann’s letter of 21 August 1789 attempts to renew his relationship with his brother after many years and numerous unanswered letters. As they are both getting older, Johann proposes that they become closer to one another.

Now then, dearest brother! As laconic as you always are as a scholar and writer “so as not to sin against the public weal” (*ne in publica commoda pecces*), do let me know how your health has been and how it is at present, what scholarly plans of assault you have to enlighten the world of today and tomorrow. But also! do tell me how things are going with my dear surviving sisters and their families, and how the only son of my departed, esteemed paternal *Uncle Richter* is. I will gladly pay the postage for your letter, even if you only write an octavo page. (*Correspondence* 317)

In case Kant does not trust the postal system, Johann enumerates a list of acquaintances in Königsberg who might deliver Kant’s reply. He allows his children to close the letter: “Yes esteemed uncle, yes beloved aunts, we all want you to know about us, and to love us, and not to forget us. We shall love you sincerely and respect you, all of us, who sign ourselves. Amalia Charlotta Kant. Minna Kant. Friedrich Wilhelm Kant. Henriette Kant” (*Correspondence* 317).

The much anticipated and long-awaited letter from Kant finally arrives, hand-delivered by a relative of Maria, a certain Herr Reimer. In the letter of 26 January 1792, Kant explains his reason for writing: “Despite my apparent indifference, I have thought of you often enough

in a brotherly way, not only while we are both alive, but also in the case of my death.” Kant writes of the support he is providing their remaining, widowed sisters and the children of their oldest sister. Moving from his avuncular status, Kant turns to his parents, who instilled in them the “duty of gratitude.” He inquires about their family situation, as if Johann had not been describing precisely that for nearly three decades. Kant closes the letter: “Your true brother, I. Kant” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 11: 320). Less than a fortnight later, Kant receives Johann’s understandably exuberant response. When the letter finally arrived from Kant (8 February 1792), again conveyed by Herr Reimer, it was a day of celebration for Johann. The joy of brotherly love turns to talk of his wife and their children.

Although she has not met you, she very dearly loves and honors you. [. . .] She gave a quite lively account [of your letter] to our children, who sincerely love and honor you. Your generous assurance that you have thought brotherly of me in the event—may it be far removed—of your future death brought us all to tears. Thanks—thank you very much my brother for your declaration of benevolence [. . .] when I, following the most probable rule, leave my wife and children behind. (*Gesammelte Schriften* 11: 323)

Johann shares with joy in the renown his brother has achieved as a first-rate philosopher and creator of a new philosophical system; however, Johann is getting on in age. Fortunately, “old age seems, all things being equal, to be the happy lot of thinkers and scholars.” He reminds his brother of his family history. He has been married since 1775 and had five children, one of whom, Eduard, survived only a year. Their daughters, Amalia Charlotte and Minna, are sixteen and thirteen, respectively. Their son Friedrich Wilhelm is eleven, and their youngest, Henriette, is almost nine. Johann also notes with each description their birthday for Uncle Kant. Aunt and Uncle Richter must be long gone by now, he adds. “They were my fatherly and motherly benefactors and guardians.” It should be noted that Johann, while often writing of their foster parents, remains reticent on the topic of their parents. This is, however, closer than Kant comes to discussing the loss of their parents in all the years of their “correspondence.” Johann adds that

Maria sends her embrace and still appreciates the book on home economics he sent years ago. “My children absolutely want to be incorporated into their uncle’s memory,” he writes in closing (*Gesammelte Schriften* 11: 323). They will be writing him letters before he knows it. There was no reply from Kant.

On 19 August 1795, a letter arrives from Königsberg that begins with the salutation, “Best Uncle.” No longer trusting the postal system, perhaps, this letter also arrives by courier. Presuming that they will never know Kant personally, they follow in their father’s footsteps and attempt to open a line of communication with their uncle. His nieces and nephew explain that they wish to be loved by him more than anything; however, he remains “forever absent, forever distant,” something that must be “animated with the imagination.” They propose that he send them a lock of his “venerable, gray hair.” With it, they could better imagine his presence and be more content with this illusion (*Gesammelte Schriften* 12: 37). There is no record of receipt of Kant’s locks. The letter does not elicit a response from Kant.

Kant does send word of their sister’s death on 17 December 1796. Subsequently, Kant doubled his financial support of her children, which has a bearing on the future support of Johann’s family. The letter ends with a friendly greeting to his niece Amalia Charlotte. There is also an enclosure for her. It is a letter to Carl Wilhelm Rickmann, her fiancé, in which Kant conveys his best wishes and drops a line about Kantian lineage. “Just as the blood of my two honored parents in its different outflows has yet to be tainted by something unworthy, in the moral sense, I hope you will find the same with your beloved.” Kant asks Rickmann to forgive the delay in answering his letter. He was occupied with “affairs that I could not very well interrupt” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 12: 140). The bypass operation of Kant’s letter in a letter brings the correspondence to a close.<sup>4</sup>

One generation down the line, Rickmann received as enclosure just the sort of letter of apology that Kant withheld from Johann. Just as he cosigns along the family line, he also gives the bottom line of his own ghostly reserve. Kant’s affairs have occupied him all this time, since the passing of the parents. He was at father’s bed-

side. Mother’s passing still drives him to postpone it in his own survival.

The art of body maintenance was one to which Kant devoted the last thirty or so years of his life, if not his entire life. Kant called it a *Kunststück*, a work of art (Gross et al. 207). *Kunststück* also, however, falls under the category of performance, as trick, feat, clever thing. Heine’s reference to Kant’s “mechanically ordered, almost abstract bachelor existence” circumscribes a vital supplement or consequence of the philosopher’s lifestyle choice (203). Because Kant had the mind, but not the body, for *Bildung*/building, the maintenance plan had to be preventive. In spite of his weak physical appearance, however, he was almost never ill. According to biographer Vorländer’s portrait, Kant’s rosy cheeks, healthy complexion, and strong, sharp senses (he also never needed glasses) prevailed over his stooped left shoulder and the inflected breast he inherited from his mother, also the cause of his soft voice (198).

Kant learned the lessons of preventive medicine at home from his mother. But the most lasting lesson was the one she gave unto death. While attending to a sick friend, Frau Kant died of quick and poisonous influenza (Vorländer 5). The friend refused to take the prescribed remedies. Frau Kant attempted spoon feeding, but to no avail. The patient refused the medicine, alleging it had a disgusting taste (252-53). What better way to convince her ailing friend that the medicine, on the contrary, tasted good, than by example? “She is suddenly overcome with nausea and a case of the chills” (253). She died within a few days as a sacrifice to friendship. Although she probably gagged on the dirty spoon, Kant maintained as the consequence he drew from the lesson that “everything bought, sold, and given in the apothecary are synonymous: drug, venom, and poison” (292).

Kant’s heterodox view of medicine required that he seek alternative medicine, especially for *Kopfbedrückung*, or “oppression of the head.” In a letter dated 20 December 1799, Kant writes to physician friend Johann Benjamin Erhard describing the troubled condition of his health, which is more discomfort than illness. The “spastic oppression of the head, a brain cramp [. . .] is related to “the exceptionally long duration of a widely

propagated airborne electricity,” continually on air since 1796. It is the same one the paper reported in connection with the cat deaths in major European cities. “And since this air quality must ultimately be transposed, I retain hope for my freedom” (*Gesammelte Schriften* 12: 296). Wasianski takes notes on what he considers to be Kant’s last theory. The final sign of his weakness was his theory of the, by all means peculiar, phenomenon of the cat deaths in Basel, Vienna, Copenhagen, and others cites. These “electric animals,” particularly cats, proved to be the basis for Kant’s theory of electricity and the end, by most accounts, of Kant the thinker (233-34). Daily, sometimes more than once a day, he repeated his resolute assertion that nothing other than electricity was the cause of his misfortune. “Kant, the great thinker, stops thinking” at this point, Wasianski concludes (234).

Kant had published his thoughts on another, not unrelated, ailment of the head, *Grillenkrankheit* or hypochondria. Hypochondria is one of two main types of mental illness or weakness of the cognitive faculty that Kant addresses in his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (*Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht*).<sup>5</sup> The other is mania. A person who suffers from hypochondria is aware that his thinking is not in order, but is unable to return it to its proper course (309). For the hypochondriac, mood changes, like the weather, are a way of life: untimely highs meet unseasonable lows, not outside but inside (309). By contrast, mania follows a voluntary train of thought, which abides by its own subjective rules. These are contrary to the “laws of experience” (309). Kant returns to this major division a few sections later, when he elaborates on his preferred totemic synonym for hypochondria, *Grillenkrankheit*. This designation, he advises, is derived from the forced attentiveness to the noise of the cricket (*Grille* or *Hausgrille* but also *Heime*) which, in the middle of the night, disturbs the tranquility requisite to sleep (317; *Gesammelte Schriften* 7: 212). Given its resonance with *Heim* or home, the synonym *Heime*, as constituent part of a nomination for psychiatric illness that is derived from personal experience, hypochondria itself, as *la maladie sans maladie*, is another word for a home sickness, a crisis of uncanniness, which cannot be named as such. The external chirping is analogous to the internal noise

that disturbs a restful night’s sleep. One suffering from *Grillenkrankheit* is capable of not only discovering illness within, but also producing it. This illness, however, involves the discovery of certain inner bodily sensations as emanating from the foreign body within. The hypochondriac is capable of hearing the chirping from within, which can be amplified by paying particular attention to certain locales. Yet the illness may remain at bay given habitual abstraction or distraction, which weakens symptom formation (317-18).

At this point, Kant drops a footnote referring the reader to the concluding part of *The Conflict of the Faculties* (*Der Streit der Fakultäten*), the last book he publishes: “I have remarked in another writing that averting attention from certain painful sensations and exerting it on any other object voluntarily grasped in thought can ward off the painful sensations so completely that they are unable to break out into illness” (318). The final part of *The Conflict of the Faculties* entitled “The Conflict of the Philosophy Faculty with the Faculty of Medicine” was originally written in response to a book sent to Kant by Professor C. W. Hufeland of the University of Jena, who was also the Royal Prussian Court physician. Thanking Hufeland for the book, *Macrobotics, or the Art of Prolonging Human Life* (*Makrobotik, oder die Kunst, das menschliche Leben zu verlängern*), Kant mentions that he would like to write an essay expounding on his own art of prolonging life. According to Gregor’s introduction to *The Conflict of the Faculties*:

Hufeland replied enthusiastically promising that such an essay would quickly be made available to the medical profession. Kant’s essay, which takes the form of a letter to Hufeland, was written in January 1798 and published in the same year in Jena, in Hufeland’s *Journal of Practical Pharmacology and Surgery*. (xxi-xxii)

The title of Kant’s contribution: “On the Power of the Mind to Master Its Morbid Feelings by Sheer Resolution” (*Von der Macht des Gemüths durch den bloßen Vorsatz seiner krankhaften Gefühle Mesiter zu sein*).

The letter addressed to Hufeland entered *The Conflict of the Faculties* as an introduction to its concluding part. In it, Kant apologizes for his delayed response, writing that “old age brings with it the habit of postponing im-

portant decisions (*procrastination*)—just as we put off concluding our lives: death always arrives too soon for us, and we are inexhaustible in thinking up excuses for making it wait” (175). With respect to a question Hufeland had posed concerning the moral treatment of the physical side of man, Kant writes that “morally practical philosophy also provides a panacea which, though it is certainly not the complete answer to every problem, must still be an ingredient in every prescription” (175). The panacea, Kant continues, is a regimen that must be adopted. It is the art of preventive medicine. One condition applies to this art. It is underwritten by philosophy or its spirit, without which regimen is not possible. In the essay that follows, Kant takes himself as the experimental subject in order to draw attention to something that does not occur to everyone, either in the sense of not thinking of something or something not happening, but has occurred to him in both senses of the word. “I have outlived a good many of my friends and acquaintances who boasted of perfect health and lived by an orderly regimen adopted once and for all, while the seed of death (illness) lay in them unnoticed, ready to develop” (181). Even devotion to the regimen, to the art of preventive medicine, offers no guarantees, as Kant learned from his mother. His *Kunststück* is a tribute to her example. Kant concludes that the regimen is about prolonging life, rather than enjoying it, and that old age can only be considered as retrospective, as a testament to health one has enjoyed.

“Medical science,” Kant continues, “is philosophical when the sheer power of man’s reason to master his sensuous feelings by a self-imposed principle determines his manner of living” (181, 183). Yet, if the healing art attempts to intervene from without into the body by means of the apothecary or surgeon, it is no longer philosophical but “merely empirical and mechanical” (183). The regimen is proactive risk calculation that does not take the body for granted. What ails the body, the seed of death festering within, is just as uncertain as all that is bought, sold, or given away at the apothecary. In Kant’s personal experience or experiment, the ailment and the remedy can be one and the same. Wallace notes his take on inoculation:

He held strong views on Jenner’s great discovery: he



termed vaccination an “inoculation of bestiality.” Twice in the year 1800—once by Professor Juncker of Halle, and once by Graf Dohna (whose bride desired to be vaccinated)—he was asked whether he considered this prophylactic against small-pox a morally justifiable one. (89)

If the mechanical injection of impurity into a system is not philosophical by any means and hence not morally justifiable, then what about the time-release mechanism already deposited inside the human body as seed of death?

After having confronted and countered the possibility of hypochondria’s melancholic excess under the rubric of reason’s veto power, Kant allows a personal reflection to follow in the next paragraph (*Conflict* 189). His inflected chest, which presses upon lungs and heart, was the natural precondition for hypochondria, which in his early years, indeed, bordered on a withdrawal of his will to live. The restrictions of his physique could not be overcome. But he has since mastered their effect upon his thoughts and acts by averting attention from the oppressive feeling as though it were not his concern (189). Kant describes how he dissociates and knows it too. Upon reflecting that his oppression or anguish of the heart was probably merely mechanical, therefore, and that, as a result, nothing could be done about it, he decided to pay it no mind. Although this did not relieve the pressure entirely, peace of mind and cheerfulness prevailed (189). Because life is limited by the body, which cultivates the seed of death, the work of the mind or spirit must be that of taking account of this limitation and enjoying life just the same (189).

Wasianski reports that in December 1803 Kant could no longer sign his name. The failure of both eyesight and memory ultimately did in the signature, while delivering its verdict: I. Kant. No longer able to remember which letters comprise his name, even when they are repeated to him, he cannot represent them in his imagination (Gross et al. 292). Around the time Wasianski begins signing for Kant, a distinguished guest from Berlin visits the great thinker and is shocked to see what remains of him. He sees “not Kant but only Kant’s shell,” and asks “what was Kant then, and what now?” (297). In “The

Last Days of Immanuel Kant,” based largely on Wasianski’s biography, De Quincey describes a sense of the living end: “[W]e had the feeling of some mighty phantom from some forgotten century being seated amongst us” (159). When it’s the end among these friends, it’s noted that what stops is the “final movement of the machine,” the Kantian *Kunststück*, his body under regimen (303).

Toward the end of his life Kant maintained special sleeping arrangements, which began not with the extinguishing of the light but a quarter hour earlier. After changing into his bedclothes, “swathed like a mummy,” he prepared his body for sleep (117). Once asleep, nothing could disturb him. If he had to leave his secured space during the night, he guided himself by means of a rope connecting his bed to the adjacent room, which was needed because he kept his bedroom completely dark night and day. Wasianski explains that Kant had returned once from an excursion to find bugs in his bedroom and decided that it was the light that caused them to prosper and multiply (Gross et al. 227). The external factor of desecration was blocked out, as was already the internal max factor of decay. But you never saw him sweat. He perspired neither day nor night, according to Wasianski (Gross et al. 228). When the time came, his dead body could remain on display for a long time because of its aridity. Initially on view in his study, the mummified Kant was moved to the dining room, which accommodated more than six spectators, and was displayed on his dining room table. The regimen that outlasted all the rest in the span of a lifetime left itself behind as maternal signature.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This reading of a “failed” encryptment in the wake of a “bid for incorporation” was inspired by Laurence Rickels’ reading of the G.E. Lessing corpus in *Aberrations of Mourning*.

<sup>2</sup> “Ich werde meine Mutter nie vergessen; denn sie pflanzte und nährte den ersten Keim des Guten in mir, sie öffnete mein Herz den Eindrücken der Natur; sie weckte und erweiterte meine Begriffe, und ihre Lehren haben einen immerwährenden, heilsamen Einfluß auf mein Leben gehabt.” Where an English translation is not cit-



ed, translations are my own.

<sup>3</sup> Johann varies the spelling of his daughter's name, sometimes ending it with an "a" and sometimes with an "e".

<sup>4</sup> Four years later Maria Kant sends her own letter, one that is in fact another kind of postscript (16 May 1800). She notifies her brother-in-law of her husband's death on 22 February. She had written shortly after his death, describing the poor state of her family and their finances yet heard no reply from Kant. Her husband left them with no assets and some debt. With the sale of their house, she writes, she hopes to cancel that debt. She implores him to help and support them in their time of need and hopes the request is not inappropriate. Maria concludes by appealing to Kant's "benevolent and philanthropic convictions, which will alleviate our sorrow" (*Gesammelte Schriften* 12: 306). About two months later (19 July 1800), Maria writes one last time to Kant, who came through for them, and they are grateful. He is like a second father to them (*Gesammelte Schriften* 12: 318).

<sup>5</sup> Klaus Doerner writes of Kant's role in the history of German psychiatry: "Kant begins his lectures in anthropology in 1772-73, and published his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, a more knowledgeable treatment of psychopathology than most contemporary medical works, in 1789. Moreover, Kant's systematization of psychiatric concepts has remained a factor in Germany; Germany's psychiatric model of the first half of the twentieth century, inexorably linked to the names of Kahlbaum, Schüle, Krafft-Ebing, and Kraepelin, was basically neo-Kantian, and German psychiatrists tend to make Kantian anthropology their point of reference" (180).

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

AUTHOR • VIOLA KOLAROV  
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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.

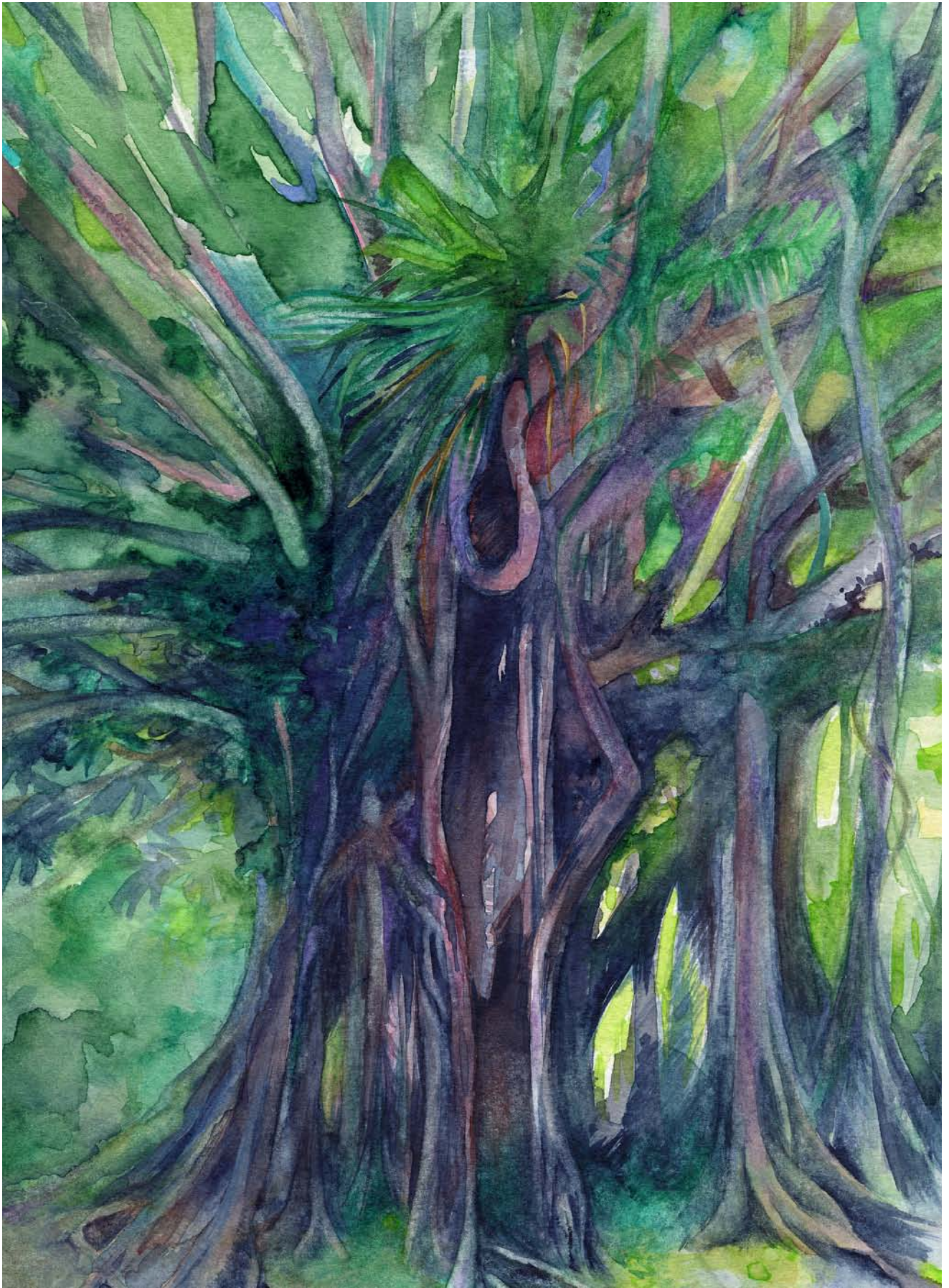
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Originally from Berlin, Susanne Lanckowsky entered the Academy of Fine Arts Karlsruhe, class of Franz Ackermann, in 2007. Since 2009 she has shown solo and in group on numerous occasions and studied abroad with prestigious scholarship support for one 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 transmet 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.<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>2</sup>—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<sup>3</sup> and provided a new forum for writing on and from crypts that remained compatible with modern discourses that shunned fiction.<sup>4</sup> Another historical line of crypt succession goes from the presumed adulteress Mary, Queen of Scots, who embodies the loss of continental European heritage, to the new maritime world order pursued by Queen Elisabeth of England,<sup>5</sup> 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<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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 undiscovered 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.<sup>9</sup> 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).

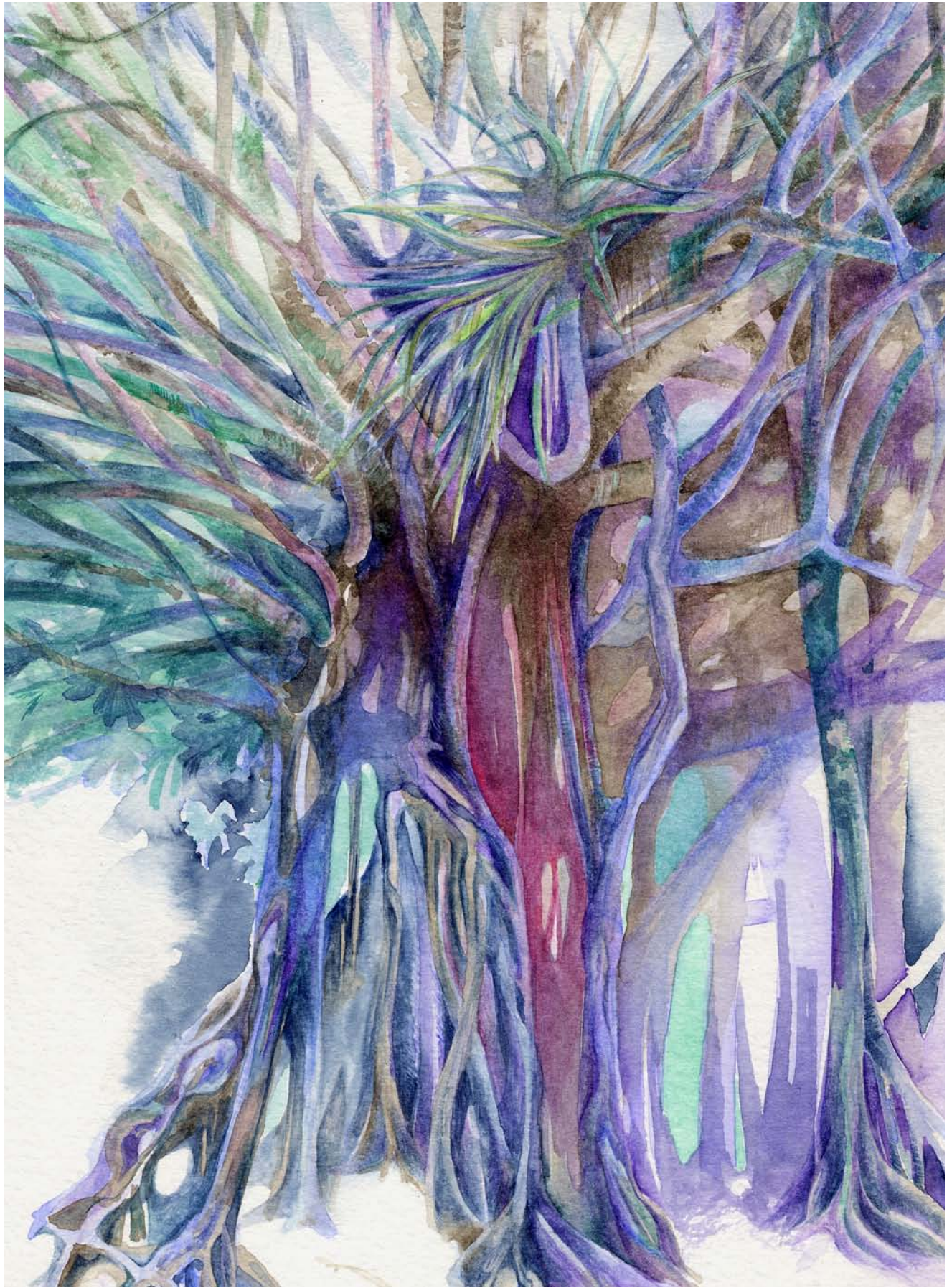
Air, unfortunately, also brings about decay. The tragedies are not far off, since instinct cannot be aired and

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”<sup>10</sup> 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 re-

ords 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.<sup>11</sup> 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”<sup>12</sup> 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”<sup>13</sup> from *The Runaways*, Joan Jett’s “I Love Rock ‘n Roll”<sup>14</sup>, and Britney’s “I Love Rock ‘n Roll”<sup>15</sup>). 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.”<sup>16</sup>

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.”<sup>17</sup>

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,”<sup>18</sup> after her career had allegedly fallen through the cracks of mental illness, she responded with a song that left no illusion she had weaved untornd. “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 corpses 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".<sup>19</sup>

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,"<sup>20</sup> 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,"<sup>21</sup> 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 ma-

tures 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

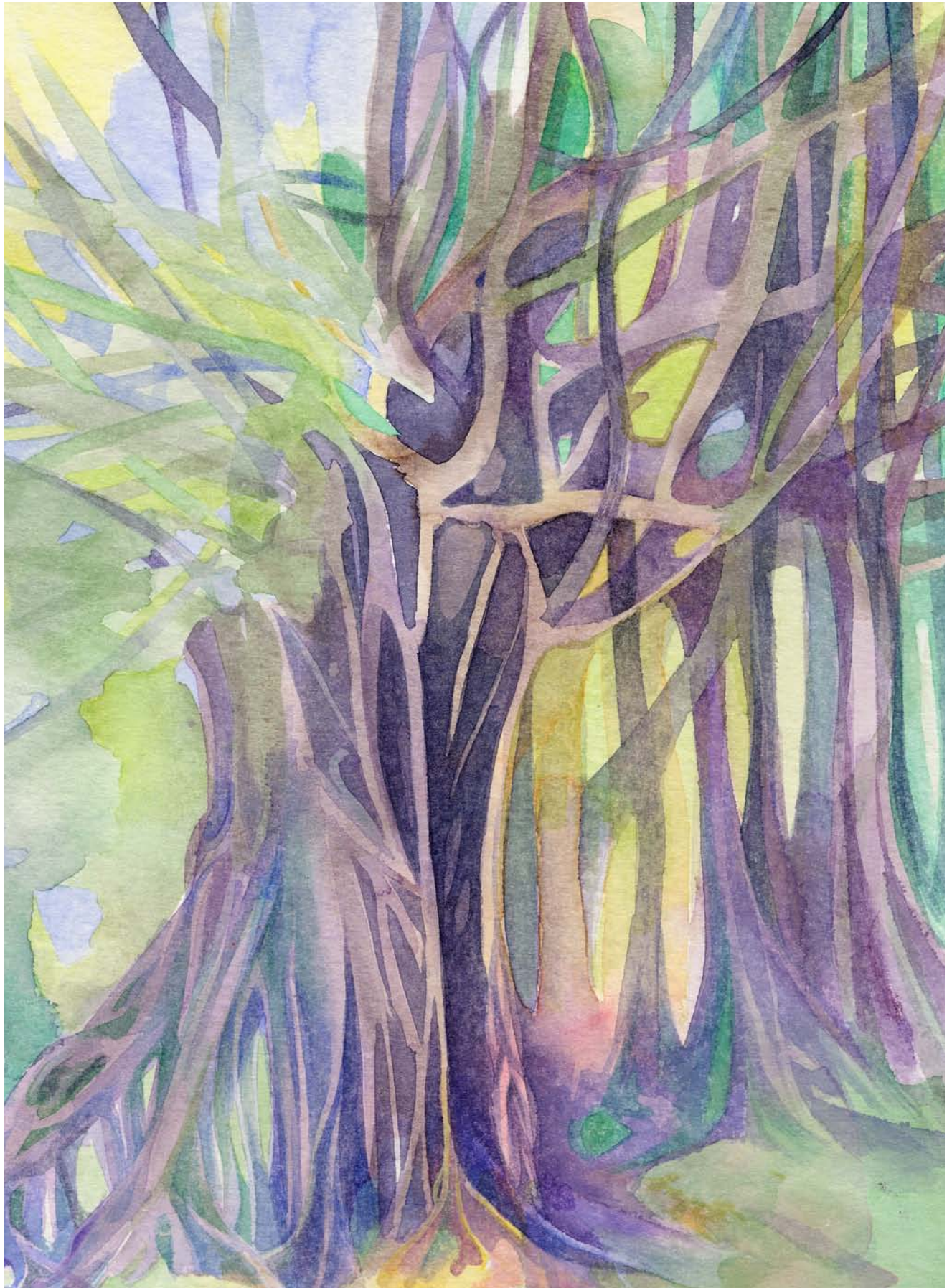
scenario, Hamlet qualifies as female. The bond grows visible in the vampiric mode of film development. Like a girl, Hamlet has to give up mother as the object and fall in love with father. This means Hamlet has to take the call to revenge, and then arrive at perfect identification with mother when he 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,"<sup>22</sup> "Me Against the Music,"<sup>23</sup> 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).<sup>24</sup> 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 un-mournable 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

<sup>1</sup> 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*.

<sup>2</sup> 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*).

<sup>3</sup> Avital Ronell presents the haunted transmission between Goethe and Freud in her 1986 study *Dictations: On Haunted Writing*.

<sup>4</sup> 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 un-mournable loss and the creature as the mourned dead. Rickels’ and Ronell’s studies reinstate the difference.

<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> 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.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> “Out from Under”:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPI\\_XOIKI9c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vPI_XOIKI9c).

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> “Toy Soldier”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMs2bExhyr8&feature=related>.

<sup>13</sup> “Cherry Bomb”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMDn6V7ZLhE>.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Jett’s “I Love Rock ‘n Roll”:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3T\\_xeoGES8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3T_xeoGES8).

<sup>15</sup> Britney’s “I Love Rock ‘n Roll”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xw3Ubww07Ew>.

<sup>16</sup> “If You Seek Amy”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/0aEnnH6t8Ts>.

<sup>17</sup> “I’m a Slave 4 U”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/Mzybwwf2HoQ>.

<sup>18</sup> “Gimme More”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/elueA2rofoo>.

<sup>19</sup> “Everybody”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUOHbeqfWio>.

<sup>20</sup> “Hit Me, Baby, One More Time”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/C-u5WLJ9Yk4>.

<sup>21</sup> “Toxic”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/0/LOZuxwVkJ7TU>.

<sup>22</sup> “Oops, I Did It Again”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/search/12/CduA0TULnow>.

<sup>23</sup> “Me Against the Music”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/BritneySpearsVEVO#p/u/11/clwLkJ294u4>.

<sup>24</sup> See Rickels’ trans-valuation of this inter-text in *Aberations of Mourning* (chapter 4).

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## Call for papers

*Imaginations* invites academic articles that discuss the historical inheritances of 20th century discourses on and between images as they are in dialogue with and articulated in 21st century cultural contexts. Potential contributions should innovatively reflect on the image. Points of departure could include new technologies, interactions between text and image, text as image, image and the self, dynamic and static images, omnipresence of screens (big and small), thinkers of the image, image across the disciplines and forms of thought (visuality, medicine, science, urban studies, political studies, gender studies, queer studies, etc.). We are also seeking, on an ongoing basis, one review essay per issue that compares three or four books on the image. Each issue of the journal will also feature one artist, and an interview with the invited/selected artist to contextualize his/her artistic contribution(s). If you are interested in conducting an interview with a specific artist, please send a proposal; if you are an artist who would like to be considered as the feature artist, please send sample work with some indication of what type of artistic contribution you would like to feature in the journal's online format. We accept papers in English and French on an ongoing basis.

La revue en ligne *Imaginations* est à la recherche d'articles proposant une réflexion sur la manière dont l'histoire a laissé son empreinte sur les discours dédiés à l'image, et plus spécifiquement sur les discours ancrés dans le XXe siècle. Nous nous intéressons également à la manière dont les images ont été pensées et produites, en interrelation les unes avec les autres, dans le temps et en lien avec les nouveaux contextes culturels du XXIe siècle. Les propositions de contribution devront faire montre d'une réflexion innovatrice sur le sujet. Sont bienvenues toutes propositions portant par exemple sur : le rôle de l'image dans les transferts culturels, l'intégration des nouvelles technologies, les interactions entre texte et image, le texte en tant qu'image, les liens entre image, identité et représentations, les images dynamiques et statiques, l'omniprésence de l'écran (« petit écran » et « grand écran ») dans notre monde contemporains, les penseurs de l'image, la pénétration par l'image de disciplines telles que la médecine, la science, les études urbaines ou politiques, etc. Les textes soumis peuvent être rédigés en anglais ou en français.

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