NARRATIVES OF EROTIC DESIRE AND DISCOURSES ON DESIRE:

FROM DISCORD TO CONCORD

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NARRATIVES OF EROTIC DESIRE AND DISCOURSES ON DESIRE: FROM DISCORD TO CONCORD

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> In truth at first Chaos came to be, but next wide-bosomed Earth, the ever-sure foundation of all the deathless ones who hold the peaks of snowy Olympus, and dim Tartarus in the depth of the wide-pathed Earth, and Eros (Love), fairest among the deathless gods, who unnerves the limbs and overcomes the mind and wise counsels of all gods and all men within them. (Hesiod, ll.116-122).

In one of the earliest narratives of the Western culture, Hesiod's *Theogony*, *eros* is conceived as predating human existence on earth, emerging along with the earth itself and coming immediately after chaos. The implication is that the immortal god Eros is responsible for engendering and sustaining life on earth as well as making the moral and rational functioning of the mind impossible. Eros, in this sense, is not only a life source that is a precondition for the existence of all living organisms and a principle for ordering the chaos, but also inevitably associated with the turmoil that it immediately follows. This apprehension of *eros*, as a concept that is vital but not completely positive, has haunted the history of Western thought since classical antiquity. Christopher Gill explains that *eros* is a term usually translated as "desire", with all of its connotations, including one of the two Greek gods of love and "passionate sexual desire" (p.X). For the ancients, *eros* is a "feeling that has become a god that has become an idea" (Smith, 319), an idea that has undergone immense elaboration through the ages and become a multivalent word imbued with a variety of connotations and conceptualizations.

Although the ways that love, sexuality and desire were conceptualized in the early periods of humanity have come down to us only in those examples preserved in writing, it is obvious that these have been integral aspects of human life since even the most primitive stages before the emergence of the ancient literate cultures. Georges Bataille argues that sexuality along with the taboos associated with it appeared simultaneously with humanity but that we just do not have sufficient prehistoric data to know about it (30). This assumption implies that, as soon as sexuality became a theme for human beings, that is, as soon as humans attained the ability of abstraction and evaluation of their behavior including their sexual activity, a discourse of desire, including its taboos, emerged. It is not surprising, therefore, that the history of human thought has been marked with the unceasing aspiration to describe what desire is, to prescribe how it should be lived, as well as to limit and to censure it.

Desire has become such a comprehensive word through the ages that today the challenge in writing about "desire" has turned out to be the difficulty of defining it. The main reason for this difficulty is that, understood as the main constituent of individual identity as it is conceived in psychoanalysis, desire becomes impossible to be dissociated from any aspect of human life. As Dostoyevsky says in *Notes From the Underground* desire "is a manifestation of the whole life, that is, of the whole human life including reason and all the impulses" (19). From this perspective, desire underlies every feeling, action and thought of man.

Desire is not simply diffused into life but it also has a liminal position with respect to various aspects of human existence. Its origin, locus and direction are never singular. When one thinks about desire, what comes to mind is something that may be both bodily and at the same time, intangible or invisible; it is also mental, but

has never been considered intellectual; it is emotive, but closely associated with willpower; it is private, but has always been directly monitored if not controlled by the public; it is individual, but necessarily directed from the self to an external object, be it another person or a thing, and hence, it also is social. Desire has been conceived as the life energy of individuals, the source of every volitional action, and most often, because of its direct relation to pleasure, a force of the body that needs to be resisted. Desire is also the resource of energy that encourages one to protest, refuse and revolt against that which stands in its way.

The multitude of connotations has rendered the term desire so elusive that it could not be contained, explicated or exhausted in its totality either in theory or in literature. In the evolution of the discourses of desire in Western tradition that starts with Plato in the fourth century BC and reaches it culmination in contemporary postmodern theory, all thinkers have addressed the question of desire within their systems of thought, concerning themselves with one or more of these connotations. Regardless of their attitudes toward the concept of desire, each one of them inevitably either started off from the discussion of erotic desire or returned to it at one point in his or her thinking, making it possible to argue that it is erotic desire that underlies the attempts at delineating desire as a general concept. As Foucault explains in relation to sexuality, in his *History of Sexuality I*, the intensive endeavor to put desire into discourse in Western tradition since Ancient Greece has been more directed to the aim of constituting it and domesticating its subversive, uncontrollable and revolutionary potential. This study does not intend to undertake the impossible task of embracing desire with all its connotations. Of all kinds of desire, it is erotic desire felt for the *other* that has played a constitutive role in the discourses on desire. Hence, this study aims to concentrate on erotic desire and how it relates to the

dominant discourse of desire and narratives of desire at particular moments in history.

Without the intention of constructing a retrospective continuity in the history of discourses of desire, it is still possible to observe that, from classical antiquity onwards, these discourses have been produced on the axis of the binary concepts "lack" and "excess". Lack has been conceived as its originating cause, and excess, its potential end unless restrained. Being occasioned by a lack, an absence which initiates an orientation toward an object for its satisfaction, desire coerces the individual to seek a complete, perfect state by eliminating the lack. Either because such a state of totality is impossible to achieve or because the immense pleasure derived from its satisfaction is only temporary, the individual can never stop desiring. The drive to cease the lack, to achieve satisfaction, may be so strong in the individual that it can lead one to accept no impediments, and to protest and even revolt. Hence, the desire for anything always has the risk of being excessive.

For more than two thousand years, until the epistemological break that came with Nietzsche in the nineteenth century, this subversive potential had led thinkers to try to delimit desire and sublimate its energy to what the ideal for them is. In the philosophical tradition of Idealism that starts with Plato in classical antiquity, continued through Christian philosophy in the Middle Ages, then the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, and reached its culmination with Hegel, desire had been conceptualized as an impediment in reaching first to *Idea*s, then to God, and finally to reason. Idealist thinking involved an ethics of life with its rules preaching moderation in, if not total abstinence from, pleasure. In his evaluation of the history of philosophy from a psychoanalytical perspective, Lacan observes that "… moral law affirms itself in opposition to pleasure, and we can sense that to speak of the real

in connection with the moral law seems to put into question the value of what we normally include in the notion of the ideal." (*Ethics*, 20) Following a Lacanian approach, in this study, the notion of the ideal will be examined in the context of its relations with pleasure and desire, especially erotic desire.

With Nietzsche, the protracted struggle between rationality and passion, reason and desire, in which the effort is to sublimate desire from the bodily to the transcendental, began to dissolve. Nietzsche, who vilified the attempts of earlier philosophers to arrive at the metaphysics of the world and discover the essence of phenomena, advocated a return to the individual and his desires. The return to the individual and the liberation of desire that starts with Nietzsche acquired a distinct twist with the psychoanalytical theories of first Freud and later Lacan. After Lacan, the liberation of desire turns into its celebration with Deleuze and Guattari, and with French feminist critics of psychoanalytical theory who focus on feminine desire in particular. The emphasis on the lack that was posited as constituting desire shifted to its excessive potential, this time as a positive attribute.

While theoreticians discoursed about desire, writers narrated desire. In a sense, while constituting their discourses, thinkers initially maintained a distance from desire, treating it as a scientific object or an object of scrutiny, whereas writers narrated it as it is actually experienced by people, breathing life into the lifeless desire of the discourse. Because desire is not only a personal phenomenon but also a constituent of the private and public domains in the lives of individuals, writing about desire has always been political. The narratives of desire have, therefore, entailed implications about power relations between people as well as within society, different subject positions, gender and body politics. They allowed writers to express their dissidence with the dominant ideology. Hence, almost without exception, these

narratives were perceived to be subversive if not perverse. Nevertheless, neither the prohibitions about narrating desire explicitly nor the punitive measures taken against it have managed to divert writers from their goal. In narrating desire, writers have engaged in a dialogic relationship with the discourse of desire dominant in their time as well as in their history. As the way erotic desire is put into discourse changed through the centuries, the writers' engagement with these discourses also changed. So long as desire was subservient to the idealist philosophies until the mid-nineteenth century, narratives of desire had an antagonistic relationship with the discourses of desire. However, when erotic desire became the center of attention and the repression exerted over it through the discourses began to be alleviated, the antagonistic attitude gave way to mutual dialogue and elaboration, despite certain disagreements.

In this study, the dialogic relationships between the discourses and narratives of erotic desire are examined in two parts, each with an introduction to the principal argument that constitutes the backbone of the chapters included. Part I, "A Longstanding Antagonism: Narratives of Erotic Desire Against Their Philosophical Antagonists" spans the period from antiquity to the twentieth century, i.e. the centuries from the establishment of idealist thinking in antiquity to its culmination as a prevalent mode of thinking by mid-nineteenth century. Although this long period of centuries can be characterized by the prevalence of idealist thinking, certain ruptures in the *episteme*, i.e. radical changes in the constitution of the ideal, differentiate them form one another. Hence, the ideal changes from theknowledge of ideas in antiquity to knowledge and love of God in the medieval period, and finally to the rational self with the commencement of modern philosophy. Part II, "Dialogic Relationships: Narrating Erotic Desire Through Discourses on Desire", on the other hand, spans the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth

century, when, following Nietzsche, the emphasis started to shift from the external world to the inner world of the individual. In contradiction to the earlier centuries when desire was discussed mostly in relation to its object of orientation – knowledge, God, metaphysics of the things – now desire started to be theorized as an inner force and more in relation to its object-cause, especially with psychoanalysis and most importantly Lacan. Following the radical breaks in the *episteme*, the chapters are not arranged chronologically to match each historical period, but rather to focus on how the narratives of erotic desire respond to the changing discourses and their delineations of erotic desire based on the changes in perceptive according to each new *episteme*.

Hence, Part I, "A Longstanding Antagonism: Narratives of Erotic Desire Against Their Philosophical Antagonists" consists of three chapters, each dealing with how a distinct discourse of desire entails sublimating erotic desire for an ideal, and how these discourses are antagonistically reflected in perhaps the best known – though infamously – narratives of desire in each specific period. In the first chapter of Part I, the founding idealist tradition of Western thought, the idealism of Plato and Aristotle, is introduced. The chapter aims to elucidate how in antiquity, erotic desire, especially felt for women, was derided as an impediment to having access to the absolute knowledge of *Idea*s. While the idealist discourse promulgated the necessity of its sublimation by substituting desire for particular bodies with the desire for the Good, the True and the Beautiful, the protagonists in the narratives of desire became embodiments of erotic desire *per se*. Hence, the title of the first chapter, in which Petronius' *Satyricon* is read in relation to Plato's philosophy based on the concept of *eros* and Aristotle's ethics, is "Desire Sublimated / Desire Embodied: Reading *Satyricon* Against the Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle". In this chapter, the

narrative strategies Petronius used to deconstruct – though the term is anachronistically used for his intention – the idea of sublimated desire in the Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy are examined.

The second chapter of Part I, entitled "Desire Christianized / Desire Secularized: Reading *Decameron* Against the Philosophy of St. Aquinas and Christian Thought", looks to the Middle Ages, when the idea of a sublimated *eros* was replaced by *agape*, the Christian love of God. As a result of this, erotic desire continued to be condemned in Christianity while the narratives of desire contradicted the discourse of the church by producing their secular understanding of desire. An analysis of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, points out the ways in which he challenges the dominant Christian ideology as it is posited in the Bible and developed by the prominent church fathers such as St. Augustine, St. Jerome, St Ambrose and St. Thomas Aquinas and brings in a secular conception of desire.

In the Age of Reason, with its roots in the Renaissance following the Medieval Period, religious faith was superseded by rational thinking, which tended to denounce the body and its passions for shadowing the intellect. Interestingly enough, despite the highly intellectualized discourses of reason that defied carnal passions, the eighteenth century emerged as the age in which writers were more prolific and obscene in their narrations of erotic desire than ever before. The third chapter of Part I, "Desire Rationalized / Desire Eroticized: Reading *Fanny Hill* Against Modern Philosophy From Descartes to Kant", deals with this highly conflictual relationship, discussing John Cleland's *Fanny Hill or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* in juxtaposition to the thoughts of philosophers who established the roots of Enlightenment, namely Descartes, Spinoza, the great English philosophers Locke,

Hobbes and Hume, and the outstanding philosophers of German Idealism Kant and Hegel.

Part II, "Dialogic Relationships: Narrating Erotic Desire Through Discourses on Desire", is also divided into three chapters, each considering the differences in the conceptualization of desire initiated with Freudian psychoanalysis in the last century. Different from the preceding part, in Part II, the narratives of desire are shown not to contradict the discourses of their time, at least not as antagonistically and overtly as the narratives of earlier ages. Here, it is possible to observe that the discourses and the narratives of erotic desire endorse each other by mutually bringing in new insights.

The first chapter of Part II, "Desire Liberated: Reading *Lady Chatterley's Lover* through Psychoanalysis", explicates how the discourses of desire begin to change emphasis and develop a more positive attitude towards erotic desire, although maintaining the association with lack, especially Freud. In this period, the sublimation of erotic desire to a transcendent ideal is no longer attempted; instead, it is confronted, not with the intention of opposition but with inquisition. D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* is analyzed in its relation to the recently emerging psychoanalytical theory which subverts the precedence reason has over passion and mind over body as constituted until the philosophies of the mid-nineteenth century. It is argued that, although Lawrence had a dislike for Freud and his theories, his work, nevertheless, speaks back to psychoanalysis by exemplifying many of Freud's arguments.

The second chapter of this part, "Desire Celebrated: Reading Crash through Poststructuralist Theories of Desire", concerns the period after the 1950s, when discourses of desire enjoyed their ultimate elaboration. This period is marked by

Lacan's poststructuralist rewriting of Freud's theories on the one hand, and the theories of his adversaries, Deleuze and Guattari on the other. Without abandoning the Lacanian approach that sets the framework of the study, this chapter aims to show that, as the discourses of desire emphasize excess, the style has also become the epitome of its content and inevitably tended to display an excess in its treatment of narrations of desire: J.G. Ballard's *Crash* is analyzed with reference to Deleuze and Guattari's "anti-psychoanalytical" approach to desire and the narrative is shown to contribute to their celebration of desire as a liberating phenomenon.

The final chapter of Part II, "Desire Femininized: Reading Kathy Acker's *Great Expectations* and *Don Quixote* through Feminist Discourses of Desire" celebrates the female voice that makes its presence felt in the production of discourses of desire. The second half of the twentieth century is marked with the theories of the French feminist critics Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva who dwell particularly on the uncontainable female desire, *jouissance*. Despite some differences in their approaches, each critic identifies a peculiarly feminine attribute in the human psyche that manifests itself writing. As a tribute to the introduction of female voice to the scene of discourses by female critics, Kathy Acker's *Great Expectations* and *Don Quixote* are examined in relation to the theories of these acclaimed critics of this period.

Certain differential criteria and strategies have been employed to render coherence to a study that could otherwise easily dissolve into total confusion due to the span of centuries and the variety of approaches involved. Even though the focus is restricted to that of erotic desire, it has still been very difficult to isolate certain narratives from the others based solely on their being narrations of erotic desire. Both because it could be a discriminating tool and, more importantly, because the main

target of the discourses of desire produced through the ages is erotic desire as experienced in sexual intercourse, the texts examined in this study are chosen from prose fiction which are perhaps the best known for their subversive erotic content and written to engage in a dialogic relationship with the prevalent discourses of their time.

In the choice of the narratives, those predominantly about sexual practices which deviate from the hetero-normative are intentionally excluded because the scope of this study would not allow for such an undertaking. Such an inclusion would necessitate including a discussion of queer theory, a whole distinct field of theory and approach, which would be impossible to embrace within the scope of this study. However, when the dominant discourse deemed a sexual practice other than the hetero-normative to be better or preferable to the hetero-normative, both the discussion of the discourse and the narratives analyzed required their inclusion. Moreover, in almost every narrative included, deviations from the hetero-normative sexual acts could be encountered, more so in the narratives examined in the last two chapters of Part II, in "Desire Celebrated" and in "Desire Femininized" where the narratives attest to the chapters' titles. This may be explained in relation to the very principle that underlies the writers' intention of being excessive. Once a work is excessive, it tends to be resistant to being delimited or contained in any singular approach.

While in each chapter the central concern is to delineate how the writers engage in a dialogical relationship with the discourses of desire – changing from discord to concord in centuries –, a psychoanalytical approach foregrounding the Lacanian conception of desire is used to deconstruct the texts at a deeper level. As Lacan states in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, the technique involved in

psychoanalysis is one of "unmasking" (10), unmasking the reasons why the analysand is suffering, with the hope that understanding will help the subject be freed from ignorance and suffering (8). He explains that the technique of "unmasking" relies on the principle of non-dependence, which means that the analyst does not get involved in the analysis process the analysand undergoes but maintains a detached stance, one which ensures that s/he does not impose any ethical values on to the subject:

> The ethics of analysis … involves effacement, setting aside, withdrawal, indeed the absence of a dimension that one only has to mention in order to realize how much separates us from all ethical thought that preceded us. (10)

Desire is one of the most important elements of – actually the subject-matter of – psychoanalysis and provides the terms to reveal its underlying mechanisms in a non-judgmental manner. Therefore, in this study, Lacanian psychoanalytical terms are used as the keys to the analyses of discourses, as well as literary narratives of desire. While the discourses and narratives have their idiosyncratic positions with respect to morality, the terms of psychoanalysis are amoral in themselves, rendering it possible to stand equidistant to both objects of study.

Hence, although the related theories of Lacan mainly belong to the last two chapter of this study, they are introduced in the introduction to Part I together with Freud's theories, on which Lacan bases his arguments. The reason for this digression is to illuminate certain aspects of the narratives of desire written before his time. In addition, although almost all of the narratives included in this study historically confronted some degree of disapproval if not censorship, this is by no means an indication of a deficiency regarding their literary merits as has been argued by many critics. These are narratives about which it would be possible to write a book if one

intended to analyze them in their totality. However, only the formal and structural features of the narratives that the writer used as means of engaging in a dialogic relationship with the discourses of desire that the work aimed to address are examined, because the aim of this study is to elucidate the workings of these discourses within the narrative structure of the work. Those features which are not directly relevant to the discussion had to be left unexamined, despite their critical and literary significance.

Erotic desire has been an integral aspect of dominant discourses at all ages. For many centuries, it has been tried to be accommodated within the systems of thought as an aspect of human existence that needs to be monitored and checked. However, being intrinsically uncontainable, erotic desire has been the returning repressed not only of individuals but also of the philosophical discourses until it had to be confronted and dwelled upon with sincerity. Even during the period erotic desire had been tried to be systematically excluded both from the lives and thoughts of individuals, writers has never ignored its significance and recognized its subversive potential. There have always been narratives of erotic desire which engaged in a dialogical relationship with the discourses of their time. Starting from antiquity, this study attempts to examine the nature of the relationship narratives of erotic desire have had with the dominant discourses of desire in the periods they were written at certain moments in history, when there have been significant changes in emphasis.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION TO A LONGSTANDING ANTAGONISM: NARRATIVES OF EROTIC DESIRE AGAINST THEIR PHILOSOPHIC ANTAGONISTS

Until the mid-nineteenth century, for more than two millennia, the dominant discourses in Western thought had been characterized by idealist thinking. The dominance of idealism had important implications for the perception and experience of erotic desire since most of the time it was accompanied by a philosophy of ethics which prescribed an ideal way of living. From Plato to Hegel, the main objective of philosophical thinking was to arrive at an epistemology of the external world and its metaphysics. In other words, the goal was to attain knowledge of the reality of the physical world that was assumed to lie either beyond the immediately visible or in a beyond within the self that could be apprehended through reason. Although the conception of the realm beyond differed significantly through the ages, the firm belief that the means to attain the knowledge of the transcendent necessitated the control of and/or resistance to bodily desires, especially erotic desire, persisted for more than two thousand years.

Plato conceived of everything in the physical world to be mere copies of the universal ideal Forms, which he called *idea*s. These Forms, which were the epitomes of Beauty and the Good, were intelligible for men through devotion to learning – women were by nature unqualified. Plato defined the motive underlying the orientation to the ideal Forms as *eros*. For him, love of the physical things, including the body, could only serve as an initial step in the attainment of the knowledge of

Forms. From the love of a particular beautiful body, one would move to the love of all beautiful bodies, from there to beautiful practices, and then to beautiful forms of learning, ending with "*that* beauty itself" (*Symposium* 211b, 49). Hence, although erotic desire was seen as an initial step, if indulged in, it was perceived as an impediment on the way to the apprehension of Forms.

Likewise, Aristotle defined a *beyond* of the external world, a Prime Mover, the perfect being that is the source of everything finite but is itself infinite. For him, all things in the world desired the Prime Mover to be able to share its infinite perfection. The Prime Mover, a god-like phenomenon but different from the god of later religions, was the embodiment of the Good that everyone should aim to reach since it was in the Good that one's permanent happiness lied. Aristotle identified attainment of the Good, and thereby happiness, to be the ultimate goal in an individual's – i.e. the Greek *male* individual – life. Hence, in his *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle wrote that this goal could be achieved only by leading a virtuous life based on temperance and moderation, which, of course, involved abstinence from all bodily pleasures.

The dominant ideology in the centuries to follow was the Christian theology, which inherited the philosophical tradition of antiquity and, in a sense, Christianized its concepts and reasoning. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Idealist tradition which had started with Plato and Aristotle continued in the Medieval period with the replacement of its transcendent ideals with Christian ones. Like Aristotle, St.Augustine, one of the most important church fathers, identified the aim of all life as the attainment of happiness that could be achieved by knowing and loving God. For Augustine, love of finite things such as objects, other people, and one's self were "disordered" love and could provide only partial satisfaction, whereas love of God

promised infinite satisfaction. One could achieve the infinite satisfaction that love of God promises by leading a life of contemplation and rational thinking. Hence, Augustine finds every engagement with this world inferior to the pursuit of a higher happiness that is to be achieved through contemplation of God. Needless to say, he suggested that Christians abstain from sex completely, like monks or nuns, or, if they could not abstain totally, that they confine the sexual pleasure to the marriage bed and only for the purpose of procreation but never for the satisfaction of carnal desires (Brundage, 35).

Devoting much of his studies to Aristotle, St.Thomas Aquinas, who lived centuries after St. Augustine, also asserted happiness to be man's goal in life, which meant his supreme perfection. He explained in *Summa Theologicae* that the happiness derived from worldly deeds was incomplete and transitory since true happiness, associated with universal good, could not be found in created things or copies. Perfect happiness could only be achieved through contemplation of the Divine Essence. However, he postponed the achievement of ultimate happiness – that of seeing God – to the life after death, which was awarded to those who deserved it through having led a virtuous life. According to Aquinas, one had to live in moderation, abstaining from any excess of pleasure and in accordance with the "natural order of things" in order to be able to attain the ultimate happiness. Because they could not deny that sexuality was necessary for the maintenance of generations, church fathers had to leave room for erotic desire while preaching asceticism as the ideal.

With the Renaissance and the Reformation in the Church, "man" became the seat of ideals that had formerly been located outside and independent of human existence. Although rational thinking had been indicated to be the means to acquire

the knowledge of the ideal being(s) – Forms, The Good and God –, in the Medieval Period, faith had equal if not more weight in the pursuit of eternal happiness. However, with the revival of classical learning and the rise of humanism, rational thinking gained precedence as the true means of understanding the world and life, and the object of contemplation became the self. In his study on the evolution of the concept of the self in Western thought after the seventeenth century until the twentieth century, Solomon writes that "[T]he world had became a human world determined (and threatened) by human aspirations":

> The world may have been created by God but it was now in the hands – for better or for worse – of humanity. The world was a human stage, with human values, emotions, hopes and fears, and this humanity was defined, in turn by a universal human nature. … The key to human nature, … was its inherent rationality, the inborn faculty of *reason*. (9-10)

With Descartes and his famous statement "Cogito ergo sum" in the seventeenth century, the human capacity for thinking became synonymous with existence, and his desire to move from introspective contemplation to objective, certain and absolute knowledge constituted the problematic of the philosophers after him, especially of the Enlightenment. They sought to discover human nature, which they assumed to be universal, as well as the universal rules that governed the universe and society. Their firm belief in the presence of such universal principles was rooted in their faith in universal reason. Following Descartes, who conceived the entire visible universe to be like a machine governed mathematically, they strove to unravel the presupposed system underlying different human phenomena. Hence, in the centuries following Descartes, d'Holbach envisioned human nature to be like a machine, Hume saw the human mind as Newtonian microcosm, and Leibniz pictured human reason as a system of built-in knowledge guaranteed by God (Solomon, 10).

In the eighteenth century, Kant's critique of metaphysics opened a whole new era in the idealist tradition. Refuting the argument that there is a reality beyond the physical world, Kant proposed that human consciousness is the source of all concepts and experience, and that there is no reality independent of the human. However, the consciousness he refers to does not belong to the individual self but what he calls the "transcendental ego", an eternal entity beyond the self. He asserted that there were universal principles and a priori concepts that were intelligible to human reason by rational thinking. His morality also relied on his confidence in universal principles: a "categorical imperative". For Kant, once purged of particular desires, one would reach absolute reason and categorical imperatives that would be true for all humanity. Thus, his morality entailed the elimination of every individual desire, especially erotic desire, and the devoting of oneself to the attainment of the universal good.

In the nineteenth century, the last of the great German idealists, Hegel agreed with his assumption about the universality of consciousness, although he was uneasy with Kant's proposition that reality was dependent upon one's experience bound in space and time,. Hegel's firm belief in progress led him conceive consciousness as constantly improving until it reached absolute knowledge. Rational thinking was, for him, the basis for moral and free action. Opting always for the universal in confrontation with the particular, he denounced acting upon one's desires, be it physical or social, not only because desires were particular, but also because, not being consciously chosen, they impeded the possibility of one's being truly free. Hence, starting with Descartes, continuing with Kant and reaching its culmination with Hegel, the self with its capacity for rational thinking acquired a transcendental status, and erotic desire was seen as a hindrance in reaching this ideal.

Maintaining the difference that Kant posits between transcendent and transcendental, [1] it is possible to observe that, in either case, i.e. whether they situate the ideal to a realm beyond knowledge and experience or a realm within but beyond the self that is the precondition of all understanding, the idealist tradition of Western thought delineated a mode of living that excluded the experience of erotic desire for the achievement of the desired ideal. Hence, erotic desire is repressed and the object of erotic desire that is found in the world of phenomena is replaced by the transcendent(al) ideal object of the world of noumena.

It is impossible not to realize the sublimation and idealization involved in this move, in the Freudian sense. In "On Narcissism: An Introduction", Freud explains that idealization is a process that concerns the object choice of desire and entails its overvaluation. The object is "aggrandized and exalted in the subject's mind" (94). Sublimation, on the other hand, is the libido's "direction itself towards an aim other than, and remote from, that of sexual satisfaction" (94); it is the seeking of satisfaction in an ideal object of desire. [2] Hence, throughout the ages, the libidinal energies of people were required to be sublimated towards an idealized objective by the important thinkers of the history. [3]

The object of desire – in this sense always erotic, albeit unconsciously so – necessarily involves some sublimation and idealization since it is closely related to one's constitution of the self. In the same paper, Freud asserts that the first objects of

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[1] Transcendent refers to what is beyond the limits of experience and transcendental to what relates to the conditions of possibility of experience, i.e. an *a priori* principle that makes experience possible.
[2] Lacan criticizes Freud for saying in his "On Narcissism" that, because sublimation implies discharge of the libido through a redirection towards another object, it does not involve repression. Lacan argues that, as soon as there is change from the initially sexual aim to an other, there is repression.
[3] The analysis of discourses of desire hereafter relies on Lacan's observation that "analysis has brought a very important change of perspective on love by placing it at the center of ethical experience" (*Ethics*, 8). The discourses of desire, which inevitably have ethical implications, are analyzed in relation to unconscious processes at work in the object-cathexis, i.e. attachment to objects of desire, in love.

desire in life are the self – as seen in autoeroticism, such as sucking the thumb to satisfy the oral drive – and the mother – the nurturer that the child cannot yet differentiate from the self – which suggests a primary narcissism in everyone. The ego development consists of a departure from the primary narcissism and investment of the libido in an ego ideal. Hence, in later life, the primary narcissism of early childhood relates to the object choice of desire based on ego ideal in two ways: anaclitic and narcissistic. [4] In anaclisis, the lovers seeks in the love-object a semblance of the nurturer at infancy, that seemingly omnipotent presence capable of granting whatever the child needs; the preoedipal [5] mother. Thus, they transfer the primary narcissism onto an object they tend to over-evaluate. Freud adds, however, that the real orientation in anaclisis is in a sense also reflexive in that it is themselves that the lovers love in loving the object. In other words, the anaclitic lovers desire an ideal object but admire their loving self in the act of loving more than the object of desire. Thereby, the anaclitic love for the object of desire becomes sense related to one's own narcissism.

In narcissism, on the other hand, lovers desire self-contentment in love and therefore desire to be desired, and, to that end, try to become an ideal object of desire for the *other*. As opposed to the anaclitic lovers who love themselves in loving, the narcissistic lovers love the other for the other's love for them. Again, reflexively, it is themselves whom they consider to be the ideal, and whom they love through the love

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[4] While Freud denotes anaclitic love as a mainly masculine, and narcissistic love as a mainly feminine form of attachment, although postulating that both are open to each sex (88-89), such a gender-biased distinction, I believe, is irrelevant in the discussions of this study, since the intention is not to argue for a gender related mechanism in sublimation and idealization. Therefore Freud's definitions of anaclisis and narcissism are explained without the emphasis he places on gender distinction, especially on the female castration complex.

[5] The pre-oedipal mother is the child's image of the mother as possessing and capable of providing whatever the child needs before it realizes, in the oedipal stage, that the mother is "castrated" (i.e. she is not omnipotent as the child imagined her to be).

of the other.[6] In either case, the object loved and desired is an ideal object constituted in relation to one's ego ideal. Through a reflexive move, desire directed to the *other* returns to the lovers' ego ideal, the one they strive to be or imagine themselves to be: "What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal." (Lacan *Ethics*, 94)

Obviously, then, the object choice in sublimation, with the idealization process it involves, is modeled on primary narcissism reformed through ego formation as ego ideal, and then projected onto the ideal object of desire. Therefore, in the sublimation process involved in the idealist tradition, the finite, imperfect and deficient phenomena of the external world, including the human body and its desires, are discarded for the infinite, perfect and all-encompassing ideal – like the immortal ego of primary narcissism or the pre-oedipal mother. It can be argued that the idealist thinkers both adore themselves in worshipping their ideals as in anaclisis, and find a part of their ideal ego in their ideal as in narcissism. Moreover, sublimation and idealization of the object of desire, situating it in a realm beyond where it can hardly be reached but the goal of attainment can be retained as an ideal saves the person from one great risk that threatens the ego in love: the loss.

In "Mourning and Melancholia" Freud states that mourning and melancholia are reactions "to the loss of a loved person or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on" (243). Because love for the object of desire requires the investment of some libido from the self onto the love-object and is also constitutively related to the ego ideal, its loss may cause "extraordinary diminution in the self-regard, an impoverishment of [the]

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[6] Freud explains the necessity for such reflexive moves in love in relation to his economic theory of libido and object-cathexis; the ego, in loving an other and cathecting libido on to an object, is impoverished itself and therefore needs to redirect some of it back to itself.

ego on a grand scale" (246). Hence, through the orientation toward a transcendent(al) object of desire, the self not only achieves an ideal state of existence but manages to evade the risk of losing the object of desire accompanying the attachment felt for transient objects as well as the pain and mourning that would ensue in the case of loss as seen in the examples of "Platonism, Platonizing Christianity, and their descendants and derivatives" (Staten, 1).

Had sublimation of erotic desire for a transcendent(al) ideal sufficed to fulfill human desire for the attainment of a perfect mode of existence, which is absolute and complete as well as not losable, the history of Western thought would have taken on a completely different outlook. However, since the image of the ego-ideal as the sublime objects of ideal modeled upon them are illusory constructs born out of narcissistic fantasies of early childhood and buried in the individual's unconscious, the fulfillment of such as a desire is impossible. Actually, Lacan claims that the Real unconscious motive underlying desire is not its fulfillment, but its endless postponement without having to face the fact that the satisfaction of such a desire is impossible in the first place. To be able to better appreciate the implications of this proposition, one should understand how Lacan explains the dynamics of desire in human psyche.

As is well known, Lacanian psychoanalysis consists of a reinterpretation of Freud's theories within a poststructuralist framework. Like Freud, Lacan's psychoanalytical model of human psyche is based on his theory about the formation of individual identity starting from early childhood, and his conception of desire is closely associated with the development of the subject in this process. Lacan claims that the child begins to desire only after a certain stage in its development as a social being. When the baby is born, it experiences an unmediated relationship with its

surrounding. [7] Unable to discern a distinction between the inside and the outside, the self and the *other*, it conceives the mother and the external world as part of itself. It is at what Lacan calls the Mirror Stage that the child starts to realize the boundaries of its body, establish an idea of the self looking at the reflection in the mirror, or at the person it assumes to be the reflection of its ideal self, and develops an imaginary body and ego-ideal. This stage is part of the imaginary period since, in the mirror reflection, the child develops an illusory sense of wholeness and completeness (*Ecrits*, 1-3). In his *Ethics of Psychoanalysis* as elsewhere Lacan explains that with the child's entry into language, the Symbolic Stage commences. In this stage, the child learns to name the objects of the world that it started to perceive as independent of itself and represent them with the words in their absence. However, the entry into the symbolic stage marks the child's loss of the previous unmediated relationship with the surrounding world, the feeling of wholeness and completeness that is the characteristic of what Lacan calls the Real. The Real is what the child experiences before the separation from the mother and the world; it is the sense of fullness and completeness, where there is a lack of a lack, no loss or absence. In that sense, the Real –written with a capital letter to indicate its distinctness from the particular – is different from reality, which is the totality of what the individual knows of the world and life as represented to the subject through language. Language acquired in the Symbolic Stage can never replace the completeness of the Real, being insufficient to represent the feeling of oneness with the world as the child experienced it until the Symbolic. The Real cannot entirely be contained within language, and an unrepresented residue always remains outside the signifier. The symbolic represses

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[7] Of course, Lacan is neither the first, nor the only, person to propose that infants cannot distinguish the external world from themselves. Jean Paiget before him also observed this phenomenon in infants.

the Real and thereby the unconscious is formed. Hence, once the child learns language, it is no longer possible to know the Real and communicate it to others.

Once the child begins to be constituted as a subject in the symbolic, it begins to become a social being and acquire the principles of the discourse inherent in the language it learns. The first *other* introduced into the mother-child dyad is the father. [8] Introduction of the father implies for the child the impossibility of the continuation of the blissful (and also threatening) [9] togetherness with the mother. It realizes that it cannot enjoy unlimited possession of the mother. With the other rules it begins to learn, the child becomes subordinate to the Name-of-the-Father, the rule and the prohibition that the father represents. Lacan states that "[i]t is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law" (*Ecrits* , 74). Thereby, the child begins to confront the big *Other*, or, in other words, to constitute the external world that will monitor and check its very being for the rest of its life.

Lacan conceives desire as being triggered by the motive to redeem the self from the ceaseless lack that marks being as soon as the child enters the symbolic stage. The desire is essentially for a return to the ideal state (*Ethics*, 12) where it enjoyed unmediated relation with the world and the mother without having to be subordinate to the Name-of-the-Father. However, being unconscious, and thus

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[8] Although Lacan uses terminology which seems to have referents as people and objects in the real world, his terms actually have metaphorical implications. When he says father, he does not necessarily mean the father but a third person in the sense that the child recognizes there are people in the world other than itself and the mother they are to have relations with. The same applies to other terms such as the Name-of-the-Father and phallus, which do not simply mean the father's name and the sexual male organ respectively, but the significations these had become overlaid within discourse.

[9] Although the unity the child experiences with the mother is a state of perfection, as the child gradually develops a sense of an "I", it becomes threatening because the omnipotence of the phallic mother constitutes a risk of annihilation for the being of the child. The child fantasizes that, if she is powerful enough to provide everything it needs, she must be powerful enough to withdraw them all. Therefore, although some feminist critics tend to interpret the entry into the symbolic as a curse, since it is the patriarchal language that the child is exposed to, they disregard the destructive potential this relation entails for the child.

unknown to the subject in its Real object-cause, this desire manifests itself in language by way of orientation to the things of the external world for its satisfaction. Lacan explains that desire is one of the three ways of these orientations towards an external object: namely, need, demand and desire.

Need is natural and universal; it is directed at the satisfaction of what the individual wants by instinct for survival with tangible objects (hunger with milk for instance). The need is oriented towards a specific object and satisfied when it is provided. In time, need becomes overlaid with other meanings and significances as the child starts to use language. The child begins to address other people and express what it wants in language in the form of demand. Hence, demand becomes a social means of establishing a relationship with the *other*. Lacan argues that, although at the verbal level, demand seems to be for a tangible object, there is always another object involved in the demand: the person addressed. The child perceives demand as a way of confirmation of the *other*'s love for it. Provision of the thing demanded confirms the addressed person's love for the child. Therefore, the child cannot be satisfied by being provided with what it demands. It keeps demanding the next thing that the *other* can give because the actual aim is not to attain the specific object demanded. For Lacan the child's real objective is to have everything, to stop the lack, and to return to the lost state of completeness in the Real. The continuous demands of the child also elucidate its misconception of the *other* as possessing everything, as having the power of giving the child or depriving it of everything. This image of the *other*, who is usually the mother, as omnipotent and all-inclusive is what is called the Phallic mother, [10] or the pre-Oedipal mother in Freudian terms.

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[10] This imaginary omnipotent mother figure is called the Phallic Mother because this is the image the child has of the mother before it realizes that the mother is "castrated", i.e. she does not have the

According to Lacan, desire shares some of the characteristics of both need and demand. Like need, desire is unconscious and directed toward a specific object. However, as with demand, it is based on an original lack and is not actually oriented towards what, at the conscious level, seems to be its object. Desire is not for what is explicitly stated in the demand, but to that which could not be contained within it. Like every signifier in language, desire cannot comprehensively express what it is that is desired. In this sense, desire is oriented towards the Real, the state of lack of a lack that does not lend itself to language. Lacan calls the object-cause of desire, the unconscious thing that is lost with entry to language and determines the impossible pursuit of desire *objet a*. The objects of desire the individuals pursue in the reality of the world are actually substitutes for the unconscious *objet a*, and hence, although they may provide a semblance of temporary satisfaction, they cannot actually satisfy the desire permanently. Therefore the subject either keeps replacing the object of desire, making up illusory excuses for the failure of the satisfaction, or sublimates the substitute for *objet a* to the position of the Thing (das Ding).

Although the concept of The Thing seems to bear some affinities to the sublime object of idealism as it is constituted by the philosophers, it has significant differences. Lacan describes sublimation with reference to its function: "… sublimation … raises an object … to the dignity of the Thing" (*Ethics*, 112). In this description, the Thing appears to occupy the position of the ideal. However, the Lacanian Thing is actually the embodiment of nothingness:

> This Thing, all forms of which created by man belong to the sphere of sublimation, this Thing will always be represented by emptiness, precisely because it cannot be represented by anything else – or, more exactly,

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phallus. It should again be remembered that by phallus the power and authority attributed to the male is implied rather than the male genital organ.

> because it can only be represented by something else. But in every form of sublimation, emptiness is determinative. (129-130)

For Lacan, The Thing is the embodiment of nothingness for two reasons: firstly, there is no such thing as the Thing, it is a mere illusion, and secondly, it is an everyday object transubstantiated in the symbolic economy of the subject. This is also the case since the Thing is "the impossible-unattainable substance of enjoyment" (Žižek, 83).

This brings us to perhaps the most important aspect of Lacanian desire: its insatiability. Although desire appears to be oriented to its satisfaction, because the object-cause of desire is *objet a*, an unconscious phenomenon the attainment of which cannot be realized, desire can never be satisfied. However, because the lost Real of the imaginary haunts the subject all his or her life and the subject cannot but unconsciously seek the satisfaction of desire, it has no choice other than postponing its realization again at the unconscious level in order not to confront its insatiability at the level of consciousness; otherwise, the whole orientation of the subject to the external world would come to a halt. Hence, sublimation of an everyday object or ideal to the status of the Thing, the unattainable object of desire and enjoyment, makes it possible for the subject to evade this confrontation.

Sublimation and the constitution the Thing are also closely associated with the *Other*, first and foremost because, if it were not for the *Other*, there would not be any need for sublimation. As Lacan writes, "[i]t is after all as a function of the problem of ethics that we have to judge sublimation; it creates socially recognized values" (*Ethics* 107). Theoretically speaking, if there were no *Other*, no symbolic function, and no unconscious created by the repression of the Real to form the ego, the individual would persist living in the Real without having to lose its *objet a* in the first place. However, the socialization process brings about the inevitable separation.

Thereby, *objet a* is sublimated to the status of the Thing which becomes paradoxically related to the *Other*; on the one hand, the Thing is the so-called ideal of sublimation, on the other, it occupies the position of the Thing, access to which is forbidden by the *Other*. In this sense, Lacan posits that the term Thing can even be replaced by "sin" (*Ethics*, 177). It is undeniable that either in the sense of an unreachable ideal or anything forbidden by Law, "sin" can perfectly occupy the position of object of desire that is expected to be "impossible-attainable". As soon as the object of desire is attained, it loses its meaning as a Thing and becomes an ordinary object. It is the Thing so long as it is forbidden by the Law. Žižek explains this mechanism thus:

> That is why the sublime object presents the paradox of an object that is able to subsist only in shadow, in an intermediary, half-born state, as something latent, implicit, evoked: as soon as we try to cast away the shadow to reveal the substance, the object itself dissolves; all that remains is the dross of the common object. … we lose the object as fantasy support at the very moment we get hold of it in reality… by obtaining the object we lose the fascinating dimension of loss as that which captivates our desire. (*Awry*, 83-86)

It is possible to argue, then, so long as the discourses of desire take hold of the Thing in the ideal sense, the narratives of desire counter these discourses by replacing their Thing with *jouissance*, the enjoyment derived from the satisfaction of desire. Lacan defines *jouissance* as the transgression against the Law. He writes that "without a transgression, there is no access to *jouissance*" (*Ethics*, 177). Ironically, however, as the Thing is dependent on the *Other*, the Law is the precondition of *jouissance*: "Transgression in the direction of *jouissance* only takes place if it is supported by the oppositional principle, by the forms of the Law" (*Ethics*, 177). Thus, by constituting prohibitions, the Law implicitly creates an area that is not permissible and thereby indirectly engenders desire for the inhibited – desire being the function of the symbolic, is created as soon as the rule that necessitates repression emerges. Hence,

the achievement of *jouissance* can only be possible by the transgression of the prohibition laid by the Law. That is precisely the reason why the Thing loses its power to fascinate once it is attained; if it can be attained without any obstacles, the prohibition must have lost its force and the Thing is no longer the object of *jouissance*. So long as the Thing remains inaccessible and the ban before its attainment remains, it preserves its sublime status.

Jouissance is the realm beyond the symbolic, beyond the Law. The realm beyond the symbolic, as explained above, is the Real that is resistant to language and knowledge. However, because it is a *beyond*, it should not be confused with the transcendent(al) of idealism. [11] The ideal of philosophy is still within the economy of the symbolic; it is a realm that is, at the theoretical level, conceived as being reachable via knowledge in language. However, the Real, the imaginary and the unconscious are neither knowable nor communicable in languages. Therefore, what we encounter in the narratives of desire is neither *jouissance* nor the Real: It is a stylization of *jouissance*. Its existence and experience are narrated by implication and multiplied in narrative imagery.

In the narratives of erotic desire, *jouissance* is used as a means of transgression against the Law, in two ways: The characters in the narratives are narrated to achieve *jouissance* literally by enjoying uninhibited satisfaction of their desires in the narrated time – which is practically impossible in Lacanian terms –, and the writer actualizes another transgression via the act of narrating *jouissance* since the Thing is desublimated by way of its contradiction to almost every element of the discourses of desire that constitutes it as a Thing, the ideal of discourse.

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[11] Critic Eugene Goodheart, for example, argues in his book *Desire and Its Discontents* that, with his idea of Real and the imaginary stage, Lacan also posits yet another ideal that cannot be reached.

Although *jouissance* is translated into English as "enjoyment" – for instance Žižek sometimes intentionally uses the word "enjoyment" for *jouissance* –Lacan himself insists that the word be kept in French, and his translators retain the word in the original, because what the term insinuates is a feeling of satisfaction that is beyond the simple meaning the word enjoyment entails. In its Lacanian use, the word *jouissance* connotes what is beyond the symbolic although it has to be inevitably expressed in language. Moreover, *jouissance* has implications other than indicated with the positive and naïve word "enjoyment". Lacan expresses the view that sexuality and *jouissance*, the satisfaction of erotic desire, are intrinsically related to death. For Lacan, as with Freud, death is internally related to sex. He explains that the subject's recognition of itself as a sexed being and its unconscious realization of its mortality occur simultaneously. The realization of the self as a sexed being – not necessarily as masculine or feminine, but as a being that reproduces through sex – also marks the moment of separation from the feeling of completeness characteristic of the imaginary and, in a sense, immortality (*Fundamentals*, 214-220). Lacan says that, in a sexual relationship, one does not simply seek the *other*, but, unconsciously, the self as a whole prior to separation. It is not "… the other, one's sexual other half, that the living being seeks in love. … not of the sexual complement, but of the part of himself, lost forever, that is constituted by the fact that he is only a sexed being, and that he is no longer immortal (*Fundamentals*, 205). In a sense, then, through sexuality, with the desire to return to the state prior to one's recognition of the self as a mortal being, the subject tries to defy death, escape its lethal grip and achieve a feeling of immortality, albeit unconsciously and temporarily. Hence, not only due to its being the means of procreation, but also due to the unconscious desire that underlies it, sexuality can be seen as an affirmation of life. In contrast, the idealist

tradition in philosophy negates life, postpones happiness to a world beyond life, and denies almost every pleasure that has to do with the body. Therefore, the narratives of erotic desire refute the grim tone of the dominant discourses by their constant affirmation of life.

It still needs to be noted that this conception of sexuality as the subject's relation to death [12] takes place at the unconscious level. However, sexual relation has implications other than those at the unconscious level for the subject. While at the unconscious level, sexual relation is for completion with the lost part of the self, the way individuals experience it involves other elements, which overlays the experience with other significations. Therefore, Lacan states in his usual provocative style of expression, that "there is no sexual relationship" (*Encore*, II.2). He means that, in the sexual relationship, what takes place is not the enactment of the above-mentioned unconscious desire to recapture the sense of wholeness, but rather an experience that involves five elements: the two people involved, the two people they imagine the *other* to be and the *Other*. Lacan calls the enjoyment derived from the satisfaction of erotic desire in such experience phallic *jouissance* – and even *jouissance* of the idiot (*Letter*, 152) –because this experience cannot manage to evade the symbolic, but remains within its economy. Lacan confesses that it is the other *jouissance*, that of women, the not phallic one, the one unknown by men and which women cannot

[12] Lacan also has another conception of death, which he sometimes calls the second-death. For him, there can be two deaths in life: the one as a biological being, and the metaphorical by total submission to the Other. The Other may even put the subject in a position of choice, where basically there is no choice; one either surrenders and dies metaphorically, or does not surrender and dies literally (*Fundamentals* 212-220). Thus, before a subject comes to the end if its life, it dies metaphorically by being subservient to the Law of the Other and annihilating its possibilities of being a true subject. Therefore, Lacan's subject is always a subject effaced at its constitution:

delineate in language even if they wanted to, [13] that manages to reach beyond the symbolic, and therefore does not lend itself to language.

It is no wonder, then, that it is the female *jouissance* that comes to the foreground in the narratives of desire that were written in opposition to the discourses of idealist philosophy. As will be seen, the main protagonist of *Satyricon* is inflicted with impotence, much to the frustration of the insatiable women in the story; Boccaccio devotes *Decameron* to women, and encourages them to pursue their desires; *Fanny Hill* is the story of a woman who discovers the potential of her body to experience pleasure and enjoys it to the full. As Lacan also states, the female *jouissance* is the true transgression against the Law, the limits set by the discourses of desire which disregard women together with erotic desire, conceiving them to be almost synonymous, and it is the means by which the writers deconstruct the dominant discourses of desire in the period they write.

The idealist philosophers displaced their object of desire with the Thing, the impossible unattainable goal in varying disguises. They could not give in to the loss of the self and the coming close of the feeling of death that sexuality entails, nor could they concede to traveling to the unknown realm where control and rational activity is impossible. They turned their back on life and its pleasures, founded the Law upon their ideals, thereby trying to constrain any transgression against it through stability and conservatism. They chose to sustain their illusion, unconsciously denying that it is an illusion, a function of the symbolic. But the Real nevertheless erupted from whatever gap it found within their discourses, and the writers of erotic desire responded to them by desublimating their ideal, transgressing the Law through

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[13] Lacan he says he even begged women psychoanalysts to tell him what the other "feminine" *jouissance* is like and concluded from their inability to give a description that it is beyond language.

jouissance and disrupting their efforts to maintain stability with a constant flux of repetitions.

CHAPTER III

DESIRE SUBLIMATED / DESIRE EMBODIED: READING PETRONIUS' *SATYRICON* AGAINST THE PHILOSOPHIES OF PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

The ancient attitude toward erotic desire is marked by a contradictory conception: a life affirming force, but also a destructive and dangerous phenomenon. It was acknowledged as an integral aspect of life, but at the same time it needed to be closely monitored and controlled. Both in Greek and Roman antiquity, there was great concern about the practices of the self and emphasis on right conduct, which also involved control over one's appetites and pleasures, a resistance to being carried away with them, keeping the senses in a state of tranquility, being free from the bondage of passions, and having perfect supremacy over oneself (Foucault, *Sexuality 2*, 31-2). Although the ancient peoples were very much concerned about matters of sexual desire, as Foucault states, it is difficult to find "among the Greeks (or the Romans either, for that matter) anything resembling the notions of 'sexuality' or 'flesh'" (*Sexuality 2*, 35). Foucault explains that the Greek term *aphrodisia* and the Roman term *venera*, which can roughly be translated as "pleasures of love", "sexual relations", "carnal acts" and "sensual pleasures", do no correspond to what we understand from these notions today (*Sexuality* 2, 35). He claims that the Greeks were more lax about different practices and misconduct in sexuality because there were no institutions to prescribe the normal or abnormal, permitted and prohibited, but they still concerned themselves with this issue as an ethical problem (*Sexuality 2*, 36).

In the second and third volumes of his *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault analyzes the conceptualization of sexuality in ancient Greece and Rome. He studies *aphrodisia* in ancient Greek society in relation to four types of stylization: *dietetics*, concerning the body; *economics*, concerning marriage; *erotics*, concerning relationships between men and boys; and *philosophy*, concerning truth. The last of these forms of stylization of *aphrodisia* in ancient Greece, that is to say philosophy, actually includes all the other three since the attainment of truth in antiquity was conceived of as being necessarily related to one's employment of one's body, conduct in marriage and relationship with boys.

Although Foucault examines the subject of the love of boys under the general heading of *erotics*, as is evident in Plato's *Symposium*, the concept of *eros* did not merely concern relationships with boys, but also everything related to desire, including and most importantly erotic desire. With the question of *eros* being an integral aspect of philosophy, Plato often returned to it in his writings. In his philosophy, *eros* is closely associated with the attainment of the *ideal*. Plato believes that the objects in this world are merely the copies of ideas that he assumes to exist beyond heaven where gods dwell. These ideas constitute the absolute knowledge which every human should strive to attain. In *Phaedrus*, he explains that human beings have the capacity to remember the ideas that they had once had a glimpse of while their souls were soaring the heavens in a time before they acquired a body. The soul attains a bodily existence, an inferior form of being, as a result of the shedding off its wings. It can only manage to soar into the heavens again by regaining its wings. The soul's wings nourish and grow in the presence of wisdom, goodness and beauty, but shrink and disappear in the presence of foulness and ugliness. Platos's description of the sight that the soul should have gotten a glimpse of in the heavens is

astounding in its suggestiveness of the Lacanian Real, a whole without ruptures, formless and not resembling anything resistant to naming as an object of the world:

> There abides the very being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colourless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to mind, the pilot of the soul. The divine intelligence, being nurtured upon mind and pure knowledge, and the intelligence of every soul which is capable of receiving the food proper to it, rejoices at beholding reality, and once more gazing upon truth, is replenished and made glad, until the revolution of the worlds brings her round again to the same place. In the revolution she beholds justice, and temperance, and knowledge absolute, not in the form of generation or of relation, which men call existence, but knowledge absolute in existence absolute; and beholding the other true existences in like manner, and feasting upon them, she passes down into the interior of the heavens and returns home. (Plato, *Phaedrus*)

This passage from *Phaedrus* also points to the direction the soul should take if it wants to acquire that immortal blissful state: beholding reality visible only to the mind. The soul is reincarnated continually until it grows its wings by remembering the ideas, which is made possible by acquiring unchanging absolutes like self-control, absolute knowledge and justice.

Plato goes on to explain that in the beauty of women and young boys, one is reminded of the beauty of the idea that the soul knew when it was in heaven. However, those driven with sexual desire only mistake the bodily, or earthly, form of beauty for the ideal. They take the reminder for beauty itself and seek physical pleasures and immortality by having children. However, the souls of those who manage to capture the beauty beyond the physical appearance begin to grow their wings and approach the ultimate aim of attaining the soul's bodiless existence. As Robinson states, "Soul will only achieve the life that is authentically its own when finally separated from the body" as its happiness "lies not in anything provided by the world of space and time, but in eternal contemplation of he transcendental forms" (Robinson, 43-44). In this perspective, mortal life on earth is understood as a kind of

punishment, or at least as a lesser form of existence. The split between the body and soul – and also mind, it being part of the soul – that was firmly established by Plato as an ideal would become irreversible in succeeding centuries.

The idea, introduced in *Phaedrus*, that it is through *eros* that one's soul can regain its wings and achieve the superior form of existence is further explicated in *Symposium*, presumably written a little later. Those who partake in the symposium – a male gathering, where men converse while drinking wine over a banquet – discuss different meanings of *eros* and its various manifestations. By making different people articulate the prevalent ideas of the time about *eros*, Plato discusses different aspects of *eros* in order to arrive at its best description and practice. As in *Phaedrus*, here again, Plato does not totally despise physical love because it would be sacrilege against the gods of love, Eros and Aphrodite. However, continuing the same line of thought, he defines physical love as a lesser form of desire, felt for both women and boys. In *Symposium*, it is Socrates who gives the final definition of *eros* by narrating his conversation with the old and wise woman Diotima. Socrates starts by describing love and desire as being constituted by a lack: "So this and every other case of desire is desire for what isn't available and actually there. Desire and love are directed at what you don't have, what isn't there, and what you need" (200e, 35). From this statement he moves on to explain that one loves the beautiful, which is also the good, but not the deformed, drawing attention to the fact that *eros* is towards an ideal object and for its possession forever: '… love is the desire to have the good forever" (206a, 43). The idea of the good and its everlasting possession is further connected with man's desire for immortality:

> If what we agreed earlier is right, that the object of love is to have the good always, it follows that we must desire immortality along with the good. It

> follows from this argument that the object of love must be immortality as well.' (206e-207a, 44)

Man's desire to achieve immortality becomes manifest in his desire for procreation, which is, however, excelled by "a much closer partnership" which is "a stronger bond of friendship than parents have because the children of their partnership are more beautiful and more immortal" (209c, 47). The implied relation is that of an *erastes* to an *eromenos* (i.e. an elder man's relationship to a boy. Socrates asserts that, while procreation is one of the ways the mortal partakes in immortality, it is an inferior form as opposed to the superior form of attaching oneself to a youth to educate him and to teach him "about virtue and about what a good is and should be like and should do" (209c, 47) as a way to achieve immortality.

In this conception, being attracted to a youth's body for its beauty is said to be "petty" as it is always possible to find yet another beautiful body; instead, it is crucial to be attracted to the beauty of mind. Love of the beauty of a particular person is defined as "low and small-minded slavery" whereas love of knowledge, "beautiful and magnificent discourses and ideas" as superior. All love is to be directed to see the ideal beauty, which is absolute and transcendent, independent of the particular, and eternal. Thus, to

> catch sight of something amazingly beautiful in its nature; this … is the ultimate objective of all previous efforts. First, this beauty always *is*, and doesn't come into being or cease; it doesn't increase or diminish. Second, it isn't beautiful in one respect but ugly in another, or beautiful at one time but not at another, or beautiful in relation to this but ugly in relation to that; not beautiful here and ugly there because it is beautiful for some people but ugly for others … It will appear as in itself and by itself, always single in form; all other beautiful things share its character… (211a-b, 48-9).

As in *Phaedrus*, in *Symposium*, the way to attain the absolute knowledge of the ideal is shown to be possible en route from eros, by going through the necessary stages, "through loving boys in the correct way" (211b, 49). One should move from the love

of a particular, beautiful body to the love of all beautiful bodies, from there to beautiful practices, and then to beautiful forms of learning, ultimately to end up with Beauty.

Symposium concludes with the arrival of Alcibiades, a young and rich man who is attracted to Socrates and has been trying in vain to seduce him for some time. He arrives right after Socrates comes to the end of his conversation with Diotima about the true nature of *eros*. Alcibiades tells how Socrates had become the ideal object of desire for him, and in comparison to whom he feels worthless. He says he is admired by everyone else, has money and good-looks but cannot attract Socrates with these. He adds that Socrates keeps company with him and some other young good-looking men, but has completely overcome his physical desire. He also confesses to having failed to seduce Socrates by devious plans. From Alcibiades' description of Socrates' character, Socrates, by rejecting the advances of Alcibiades and other young men, emerges as the embodiment of the ideal love Diotima promoted and that he narrated in the symposium. Foucault also interprets this narration of Socrates by Plato as a sign of the prominence of "the thematics of a relationship between sexual abstinence and access to truth" (*Sexuality 2*, 20-1).

Because Socrates asserts that it is possible to attain Beauty by loving boys in the correct way, the way to seeing and reaching the beauty of the Idea is closed to women, who are neither allowed to partake, nor are they seen as capable of partaking in these steps to arriving at "divine beauty". As Foucault also observes, the ancient texts that prescribe the right conduct in all matters, including sexuality, *Symposium* being among them, were intended for males to elaborate and stylize their exercise of male power and liberty (*Sexuality 2*, 23). This, on the other hand, leaves the question of why it is a woman who has to teach how the love of beauty is achieved

unanswered. As Kristeva points out, before Socrates, it is Diotima who had realized the highest form of *eros*. Diotima is the true ideal of love since she is the one who desexualizes it and presents it "more along the lines of an idealized object relationship" (Kristeva *Love* , 72), and thereby becomes the embodiment of the philosophical knowledge that is aspired to through *eros*. Kristeva writes that "the inspired, joying vision of a sublime beauty, an ideality that is powerful, absent but accessible by dint of dignified procreation, comes to us from a woman" who is *the* idealist [14] (Kristeva *Love* , 75).

Aristotle takes up Plato's idealist philosophy and promulgates an ethics of character. Following Plato, Aristotle posits soul to be the Form and the body to be the matter, which are, contrary to Plato's conception however, not separable. For Aristotle, soul is the principle of life in a living being, the cause of its existence, the qualities of which he examines in his work *On the Soul* (*De Anima*). It is of the substance of the Prime Mover, the ultimate divine good, which everything naturally desires to reach. While having a soul is a quality that humans share with the animals, it is having a mind that differentiates humans from animals. Mind is "the part of the soul by which it knows and thinks" (Aristotle, *On the Soul* iii, 4) and has a reasoning capacity. He also defines desire to be a part of the soul that, being goal oriented, initiates movement: "That then such a power in the soul as has been described, i.e. that called appetite, originates movement is clear" (*On the Soul* iii, 10). However, desire is not uniquely human as is mind, but is common to animals as well, and

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[14] However, this is not a positive figure but the embodiment of the "fascinating and repulsive" sovereign mother by abjecting whom the individual establishes his/her subjectivity – and either *maintains* or *transgresses* her (Kristeva *Love* , 79). In transgression, the attempt is made to reach the idealized sovereign mother in language through philosophical education. She interprets the figure of Diotima as a figure denoting the ideal all knowing sovereign mother (Kristeva *Love* , 79-80) For her, eros represented by Pheadrus and Alcibiades, is "Raving Eros", whereas that represented by Diotima is "Sublime Eros" (Kristeva *Love* , 74).

hence susceptible to misconduct unless united with reasoning faculty. Especially in the work said to have written for his son Nicomachus, *Nicomachean Ethics* (*Ethica Nicomachea*), Aristotle developed an ethics of life to eliminate the susceptibility human beings to desire. His primary aim was to achieve a refinement of personality toward the end of achieving happiness, which is, for him, the ultimate goal of life. He asserts that one can be happy only by attaining the good and leading a decent life:

> … in view of the fact that all knowledge and every pursuit aims at some good, what it is that we say political science aims at and what is the highest of all goods achievable by action. Verbally there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy (Book I-4).

Thus, Aristotle establishes a direct relation between happiness and the ethics of life. His ethics is based primarily on temperance as a very important virtue, which is perhaps the most important ideal of antiquity in general. What guides Aristotle to determine temperance as the main goal in life is his assumption that it is in the nature of things to be destroyed by "defect and excess". Therefore, he promotes the idea of the "golden mean".

For Aristotle, temperance can be achieved only by abstinence from pleasure (Book II, 2). His ethics relies on the correct management of pleasure and pain – the latter being related to the former by being its opposite – which are, for him, the main concern of virtue and political science because "every passion and action is accompanied by pleasure or pain," and a man's goodness and badness depends on his use of these (Book I, 3). Nevertheless, he makes a distinction between the pleasures of the body and the pleasures of the soul. For him, love of honor and learning are among the pleasures of the soul and, with regard to these types of pleasures, the terms of temperance and self-indulgence are not applicable. Temperance and self-

indulgence are, for him, concerned with pleasures that humans share with animals such as touch and taste, the former being the cause of all enjoyment, as in tasting food, drinks and sexual intercourse (Book III, 10). Indeed, Aristotle reiterates this same trio of food, wine and sexual intercourse as examples of bodily pleasures, observing no hierarchy among them, and reiterating the association of their excessive use with vice. He emphasizes that the irrational beings' desire for pleasure is insatiable and prone to excess; therefore, desire needs to be subject to "rational principle" (Book III, 12). This is how he defines the ideal temperate man:

> The temperate man occupies a middle position with regard to these objects. For he neither enjoys the things that the self-indulgent man enjoys most-but rather dislikes them-nor in general the things that he should not, nor anything of this sort to excess, nor does he feel pain or craving when they are absent, or does so only to a moderate degree, and not more than he should, nor when he should not, and so on; but the things that, being pleasant, make for health or for good condition, he will desire moderately and as he should, and also other pleasant things if they are not hindrances to these ends, or contrary to what is noble, or beyond his means. For he who neglects these conditions loves such pleasures more than they are worth, but the temperate man is not that sort of person, but the sort of person that the right rule prescribes. (Book III, 11).

Hence, the most important Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, whose ideas were to leave an imprint on philosophy for millennia after them, based their idealist philosophies on rational thought and ethical behavior, notions which the Romans borrowed from them and elaborated upon. Their ideals of controlling oneself and having supremacy over the passions imply a split existence in which the supposedly better part of the self - soul - tries to hold the lesser side - body - in check. As Robinson states, "[a]ll desires are in fact, says Plato, a feature of the soul; though many of these will be correctly described as operating via the body. And all such desires, if correctly canalized, can be directed to serve the ends of out rational and ultimately most genuine selves (Robinson, 46). Hence, the genuine self is professed

to be achievable by cultivating the soul though knowledge and leading a life that represses those desires of the soul that manifest themselves through the body. Thus, Plato, by assigning the *idea*s to heaven (where, being freed of the body the soul will reunite with them), and Aristotle, by assigning the ultimate Good to the Prime Mover God, to which man should strive to come close, both, in a sense, defy worldly life for a superior mode of existence. Hence, the idealist philosophers of antiquity postponed the happiness to be derived from the satisfaction of their desire to the afterlife, when the soul would finally be freed from the physical body.

Thus, as soon as human beings conceive a split between the body and the soul, between the finite physical objects and an infinite metaphysical essence beyond them, the actualization of the ideal of reaching them, based on the narcissistic self as a complete being without a lack, becomes the ultimate but impossible ego-ideal. It is no wonder that, starting from antiquity, the recognition of the transitory (and therefore lacking) nature of physical things which are deemed to be mere shadows, copies of the Ideal, and love of these, including the human body, is categorized as being of a lesser order. In splitting the self into body and soul and sublimating desire for the physical to the transcendent, the ego itself is elevated to the status of the transcendent through its soul; the soul becomes the part of the self capable of being immortal, transcendental and hence without lack. The soul becomes the Thing in the Lacanian sense, and the desire for it can forever be perpetuated since the ancient ideals for the attainment of the knowledge of metaphysics of objects in this world and completion of the task of achieving the ultimate good is an impossible pursuit that cannot be concluded in life. Kristeva calls this direction of desexualized love to one's soul, and the attempt to constitute it with a potential for perfection and immortality, *soulosexuality* (Kristeva *Love* , p78-80).

Among the ancient narratives of literature, with its emphasis on erotic desire together with desire for everything worldly and employment of excess both at the thematic and structural level, *Satyricon* is one of the most prominent narratives of desire, one that stands out in contradiction to this *soulosexuality* of the philosophers of antiquity. Found only as fragments of manuscripts and with a much debated date of composition and attribution of authorship, the text is commonly attributed to Petronius Arbiter, a courtier of the Emperor Nero.[15]

The only information we have about Petronius Arbiter's character and life is found in Tacitus' *Annals*, where we learn that Petronius was a "refined voluptuary" who spent his days sleeping and in laziness, his nights in work and enjoyment of life but not a simple spendthrift or debauchee (Arrowsmith, vi-ix; Heseltine, ix-xi; Sullivan 1986, 11-16). He was a man of taste whose approval Nero sought in all of his imperial pastimes and entertainment. However, this having aroused the jealousy of Tigellinus, who had made the emperor believe that Petronius was an ally of Scaevinus, a conspirator, Nero forced Petronius to commit suicide. Petronius confronted the verdict astutely but did not fail to send a sealed narrative of Nero's debaucheries to him before he died. Although some argue that *Satyricon* is the narrative Petronius sent to Nero before his death, considering the length of the extant fragments and the missing sections, it is difficult to accept this possibility.

The manuscripts of *Satyricon* survived with a variety of spellings, leading to different interpretations of its meaning. While Heseltine proposes only the word *satura* to be the root the title *Satyricon* derived from (xii), Arrowsmith suggests that

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[15] For a comprehensive study of the arguments for and against the Neronian dating of the work and its attribution to Petronius, see K.F.C Rose's *The Date and The Author of Satyricon*. Rose discusses all the arguments by scholars over the centuries together with the internal evidence in the text, examining the references to social context and allusions to other literary and philosophical texts in order to conclude that *Satyricon* was written around 60 A.D. during the reign of Nero and the author was the Petronius Arbiter described in Tacitus' *Annals*.

the title could have been the writer's intentional punning on both *satura* and *saturika*, the former meaning satire, which, in its Roman sense, implies a medley of mixed subjects in a variety of styles, and the latter meaning "concerned with satyrs" (i.e. lecherous) (x). Courtney, on the other hand, argues that the Roman reader would not connect the title to the Greek word for satire but understand it as relating to the Greek Satyrs and interpret it as "A Tale of Satyr-like Lust and Depravity" (13-4). Nevertheless, there seems to be a general agreement that the title of the work, being associated with satyrs, reflects the content of the work; a narrative of worldly pleasures.

As for the form of the narrative, scholars also agree that *Satyricon* is a fine example of Menippean satire[16], which is a blending of prose with verse, philosophy with realism (Arrowsmith, x; Bakhtin, 27; Sullivan 1986, 20). The use of this form, which allows for a blending of a variety of forms, made it possible for Petronius to compose *Satyricon* as an epitome of excess both at the structural and thematic level. Arrowsmith notes that, in addition to being a satire, *Satyricon* incorporates comedy, Milesian tales, allusions to farce, mime and tragedy, while the overall work can be called a "kind of burlesque and mock-epic" (xi-xiii). For McGlathery, it is a picaresque or an ancient novel (312) and for Sullivan a picaresque, a parody of knightly romances and a homosexual parody of Greek novels (1986, 19).

However, contemporary studies reveal that, although *Satyricon* was neglected as an insignificant work of literature because of its obscene content, Petronius actually displays a vast learnedness with his meticulous interweaving of allusions to, and stylistic details from, a variety of works, both literary and

[16] A form created by Menippus of Gadara and continued by his Roman disciple Varro.

philosophical. [17] He refers to many texts to parody them, to ridicule their serious tone and sublime ideals. Hence, he transgresses the ideal of moderation both at the thematic level – by subverting their decorum – and at a structural level – by incorporating formalistic details from multiple genres which makes its association with a single one difficult. This approach reveals a tendency for excess reiterated in other aspects of the narrative.

Because the work has come down to us in fragments, there are serious gaps in the narrative, which, nevertheless, does not hinder us from being able to follow the main story line. The narrative starts in the middle of a literary discussion in which our narrator, Encolpius, criticizes the unreality of the themes used in literary work, which, according to him, is hazardous to the young minds that learn these at schools. He objects to the fact that all these young people hear about is "pirates standing on the beach, dangling manacles, tyrants writing orders for sons to cut off their fathers' heads, oracles advising the sacrifice of three or more virgins during a plague" (37). This and the following criticism he raises about literature have the double effect of, first, implying that what follows will not be of the same kind (i.e. stories without "any use in everyday life") and, second, revealing that, behind the pretense of learnedness, the narrator is actually ignorant of any in-depth knowledge about these sophisticated subjects. Hence, as soon as the narrative starts, the narrator is revealed as an unreliable impostor.

In the narrative, Encolpius comes across his friend Ascyltus with whom he goes home. They live in the same house with Giton, Encolpius' minion. It soon becomes evident that the three are sexually involved with each other. Encolpius and

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[17] Courtney's *A Companion to Petronius* traces every reference in the *Satyricon* to the specific form, work and even line to which it alludes, elucidating the dialogy of the text with many of the noteworthy literary and philosophical text of its era.

Ascyltus quarrel about the latter's attempts at seducing Giton and decide to split their belongings and take care of themselves separately. However, after a gap in the text, they are together again trying to sell a cloak they had stolen and recover a tunic in which they had hidden money. After quite a hustle, they manage to get back to their room at the inn where a priestess of god Priapus,[18] Quartilla, intrudes into their room unwarranted. It can be deduced from the scene that, in a missing part, Encolpius and his friends had profaned the god Priapus by secretly peeking at the ritual performed at his shrine, and Quartilla has come in tears to ask for recompense and ensure their silence on what they had witnessed. As soon as Encolpius tells her that they are ready to concede to whatever is necessary to compensate the wrong they had done, the woman displays a disproportionate joy and takes them to her house to make them pay for their profanation. The remedy for the sacrilege turns out to be a form of orgy including a kind of torture. However, much to Quartilla's frustration, Encolpius is inflicted with impotence from which he cannot recover until the end of the narrative. The adventure with Quartilla ends with the mock-wedding of young Giton, who is about sixteen years of age, to the seven-year old Pannychis, and Quartilla peeping through the crack to see their love-making and forcing Encolpius to do so.

The section that has been found in its entirety, known as the *Cena*, is the feast at the house of ex-slave, but recently rich, Trimalchio. In *Cena*, Encolpius and his friends are mere observers rather than active participants of the scene. Trimalchio shows off with all sorts of extravagance and attempts at following upper-class

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[18] Priapus is an ancient god of sexuality and fertility, and, in his more domesticated aspect, he was the Roman garden god, usually depicted with a huge red phallus; some legends made him the son of Dionysus and Aphrodite (Sullivan 1986, 187-8). In *Satyricon*, he is to some extent the comic lord of sexuality and potency Priapism, the disease marked by constant excitation, takes its name from this Roman god (Foucault, *Sexuality 3*, 113). The disease is also called satyriasis (*Sexuality 3*, 115) deriving from the word satyr. It is possible that the work is entitled *Satyricon* (i.e. concerning satyrs, -*icon* being the genitive suffix) both because of the licentiousness of its characters, and also because it can be read as the epic story of a protagonist condemned by Priapus' wrath below.

fashion, which, however, reflect a lack of refinement, and his displays of sophisticated learning are marked with ignorance. Having eaten from the food that has been served all night and enjoyed themselves until dawn, Encolpius, Asycltus and Giton get away from the banquet and go to their room at the inn, where first Encolpius and Ascyltus (after Encolpius falls asleep) enjoy Giton's "favors". Encolpius and Ascyltus quarrel over Giton, and once again they decide to split their property and go their separate ways. Unable to decide with whom Giton is to stay, they leave the decision to Giton, who chooses Ascyltus. Encolpius is devastated and indignant. After spending three days crying, he finally decides to take his revenge dressed as soldier. However, he is soon disarmed and sent back to his room by a real soldier. After a small gap in the text we find Encolpius at a picture gallery where he meets Eumolpus, who replaces Ascyltus in the rest of the adventures.

Eumolpus is an old man impersonating a literary man but has neither accurate knowledge of, nor talent in, literature. They converse about the pictures, and Encolpius, having complained to him about his misfortunes about Giton, invites Eumolpus for dinner and they part. At the baths Encolpius sees Giton, who asks for his forgiveness. The two unite happily and, in the evening, Eumolpus join them. Eumolpus, unaware that Giton is the boy Encolpius had been telling him about, courts him, which infuriates Encolpius. After a farcical episode that begins with Encolpius' quarrel with Eumolpus, Eumolpus locks Encolpius in his room to be able to follow Giton freely. Encolpius attempts suicide and is saved by Giton who pretends to attempt killing himself too. Right at that moment, Ascyltus comes with other men looking for Giton. Giton hides and Ascyltus leaves without him. However, he and Encolpius cannot fool Eumolpus, who discovers Giton under the bed. Encolpius asks of Eumolpus in tears to help them get out of the town without

Ascyltus knowing. They all pack and board a ship. Unfortunately, there is no end to their misfortunes since, soon after the ship leaves the harbor, they discover that they are on board Lichas's ship, and Lichas is accompanied by Tryphaena.

Lichas is a rich sea-captain and Tryphaena a courtesan who loves luxury, traveling and fun. It is revealed from references back to an earlier episode in the narrative that, in one of the missing sections, Encolpius and Giton must have come into contact with Lichas and Tryphaena and invoked their rage; most probably Encolpius, by seducing Lichas' wife, and Giton by deceiving Tryphaena and causing her public disgrace. They try to conceal their identity in vain and are discovered. A mock trial is held, at the end of which they are reconciled and Lichas and Tryphaena promise not to sexually abuse either Encolpius or Giton without their consent. They do not, however, remain faithful to their promises and provoke Encolpius' jealousy. The text recovers at a point where a storm breaks out and causes the ship to sink and Lichas dies. Encolpius, Giton, Eumolpus and his servant Corax manage to reach the coast and arrive at Croton.

Croton is an immoral city where only legacy hunters and those they hunt live. Having learnt this, they devise a plan according to which Eumolpus would pretend to be a rich man and the others his slave servants, and they would live on the gifts given to them by the legacy hunters hoping to receive more in return. The plan works perfectly for quite some time. The incident with a woman named Philomela who leaves her daughter and son to Eumolpus to be "educated" by him, while everybody including the children realized that the education actually means letting them be sexually abused by the old man, is an example of the extent of the immorality of the legacy-hunters of the town.

Meanwhile, Encolpius, undercover as a slave, attempts a sexually unsuccessful affair with a beautiful woman named Circe, but he is still inflicted with impotence. The remedies of witchcraft and atonement at the temple of Priapus prove useless, mostly because he causes more sacrilege while trying to undo his earlier mistake. Only later do we learn that he recovers his virility by the help of a greater god. Towards the end of the narrative, Eumolpus reads out his will, where he declares that he will grant his legacy to whoever fulfills his desire to be eaten after his death. The narrative ends the speech of a legacy hunter Gorgias, who, ready to fulfill the requirement Eumolpus' will, justifies himself by citing instances of cannibalism from literature. It should be noted that this outline, inevitably, does injustice to the richness of the text and its hilarity.

The excessive employment of sexual scenes, the characters' concern with their own sexual potency and attractiveness, in addition to depictions of other physical pleasures as well as deceptions and trickery has led to a questioning of whether Petronius is an amoral, immoral or moralistic writer. It is, of course, impossible to know Petronius' authorial intention or how exactly the work was received. Some critics argue that his intention was to criticize Roman society of his time (Arrowsmith, xv), some that he simply wanted to create a realistic depiction (Sullivan 1986, 20), and others, while arguing that the text cannot be called immoral due to the use of decorous language and restraint in narration of sexual scenes, or amoral due to the use of a "rascal" who cannot pass any moralizing judgment as the narrator, Petronius still needs to be called a moralist because a deeper reading reveals a coherently moralistic interpretation of contemporary life and society (Courtney, 123-4).

In the absence of a meta-language, an attitude that reveals itself either through the narrator or the vocabulary used – none of the scholars note such a sign intrinsic to the text – arguing for a moralistic attitude that merely emerges in the reading does not seem plausible. This may, instead, point to the readers' projection of their interpretation onto the text. Regardless of discussions of moral intentions, however, the textual clues make it possible to deduce that one of the major intentions of the author was to respond to the discourse of desire both of the times and of the past.

There are mainly three strategies with which Petronius problematizes the discourse of desire of the era. First, he replaces the negation of desire for the body and other worldly pleasures promulgated as the ideal in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle with the indulgence of the characters in every kind of physical satisfaction. Second, he displays an affirmation of life in the face of impending death instead of the sublime ideal of a transcendent existence and repudiation of earthly life. Finally, he transgresses the ideals of temperance and moderation with structural excess not only by parodying a multiplicity of genres, as argued above, but also, both in the main plot and the tales inserted into the narrative, with continuous repetitions of acts and themes of excess and erotic desire. The first two of these aims are attempted by disrupting the hierarchies imposed by idealism, not in the way of turning it upside down as in Bakhtinian carnivalesque but rather, as Conte argues, by leveling the two poles of the spiritual and the bodily, the abstract and the material (114) without imposing a biased hierarchy among them.

From the outset, it is obvious that the main characters of *Satyricon*, Encolpius and Ascyltus, are in total contradiction to the ideal character of men defined by Plato and Aristotle; they are men who act only towards the satisfaction of

their immediate desires without the constraint of any ethical values. Although there are different glosses given by different scholars for the names of these characters, whatever the case may be,, their names hint at their personality. Encolpius has the possible meanings of "The Crotch" (Arrowsmith, xv), or "Bosom Friend" (Courtney, 42) and Ascyltus "The Inexhaustible" (Conte, 39). These characters, as well as the others in the narratives, are intended to be types not personalities with in-depth psychology, something which will not really be seen in literature until the end of the Middle Ages. Devoid of any refinement of character, they are the embodiments of every vice the philosophers wanted to expel from the human soul. They are excessively hypocritical and desirous of sex; they betray and deceive each other; they steal, abuse and even kill. It is understood from the extant text, together with references to the missing parts, that all male characters enjoy sex both with boys and women, and they exchange their bedmates, sometimes by agreement, and sometimes by plotting behind each other's backs, almost all accompanied by displays of jealousy. In the Lacanian sense, they are the epitomes of the primordial father-jouisseur, the father-of-enjoyment.

Lacan's father-jouisseur is the counterpart of the rational father of the Name-of-the-Father. While the Name-of-the-Father represents Law and prohibition, the primordial father-jouisseur, who is built upon the primordial father of enjoyment in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, is not bound by any prohibitions or the threat of castration. The father of uninhibited enjoyment in *Totem and Taboo* was killed by his sons because he enjoyed *jouissance* as he liked, but constituted an obstacle to their enjoyment. However, Lacan explains that, "[a]lthough the obstacle is removed with the result of the murder, *jouissance* is still prohibited; not only that, but the prohibition is reinforced" (*Ethics*, 176) because, in *Totem and Taboo*, Freud tells

that, after the murder, the sons made a pact between them that set rules preventing uninhibited *jouissance* so that they would not meet the same fate. In this way, they caused the prohibition to be strengthened rather than eliminated, and their becoming a father-jouisseur themselves turned out to be an impossibility.

Therefore, although father-jouissuer is the primordial father, he is nevertheless a myth, a fantasy that constitutes "the ultimate guarantee that there is somewhere full, unconstrained enjoyment" (Žižek, plexus.org) which cannot be reached. However, in Satyricon, Petronius's protagonists, unheeding to the rules of society and even friendship, enjoy the satisfaction of their desires with utmost egotism. In a sense, they realize the male fantasy of the father-jouisseur.

The women, on the other hand, are depicted as always readily sexually available and insatiable, draining men of their strength. They are infuriated when men prove unable to satisfy them sexually. Although this may seem in compliance with the ancient view of women as being by nature prone to sex and knowing its ways instinctively (Parker, 97), such a representation is in total contradiction to how they were expected to act, as prescribed by the rules of society. As Aline Rouselle delineates in *Porneia*, women in antiquity, were considered the property of husband. Even in marriage their consent was not sought; if a man decided to marry a girl and her parents approved, marriage would take place. Other than being the mistress of the house and mother of the children, women's share in the marriage was completely disregarded. The concept of adultery was applicable only for the woman if she was married, the reason being that she thereby dishonored her husband and rendered his fatherhood of his children suspect. Likewise, rape was considered a crime only if the woman was married because it would mean disrespecting another man's property

rather than violating a woman's body or her rights over her body. Women had no say over their bodies.

Female pleasure was completely neglected, and women were used only as the means for male pleasure and dominance (Sutton, 8-9). On the other hand, women in *Satyricon* convey a completely different presentation. Tyrpheana and Circe especially are women who seek their pleasure persistently and do not feel bound by the rules of the society. Their main concern is the satisfaction of their desires. Likewise, the two supposedly holy figures in the narrative, the priestesses of Priapus, Quartilla and Oenothea, as evident from the god they have chosen to serve, are simply devotees of erotic desire. Moreover, the only wives in the narrative, Trimalchio's wife, Fortunata, and Scintilla, the wife of Trimalchio's rich guest Habbinas, are not social ideals, but vain women who like to show off the jewellery their husbands have bought for them. Their merits as women, such as running the house skillfully, are not praised but ridiculed. In *Satyricon*, just as men are the epitomes of father-jouisseur, women are the epitomes of "Woman". Lacan, in his seminar Encore and Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, argues that The Woman, as the sublime ideal of male fantasy, a perfect inaccessible being, does not exist; therefore, we cannot write Woman with a capital letter and we should write "The" under erasure (~~The~~). Žižek explains that Woman as the capricious lady of the courtly love who wants it all and is not bound by any Law is the counterpart of father-jouisseur, and therefore one of the names of father – plural and without capital letter, not Name-of-the-Father, hence not a function of Law ("Woman", plexus.com). Likewise women in *Satyricon*, the ones that the writer foregrounds, are Women, the realizations of the unconscious fantasy just as is father-jouisseur.

Thus, all of the prominent characters in *Satyricon* indulge in the types of love that Plato in his *Symposium* defined to be the least worthy: love of the body, of men and women alike. Even the comparatively higher form for the manifestation of desire, *eros* for boys, which Plato asserts as the way to the attainment of truth and beauty, is ridiculed both in the relationship of Encolpius and Giton, and in the story of an *erastes* and an *eromenos* that Eumolpus tells at the picture gallery.

In the kind of ideal relationship between the *erastes* and the *eromenos* envisaged in ancient philosophy, the attention was not on the pleasures one enjoyed, but rather on the form and ethical meaning attributed to it (Foucault, *Sexuality 2*, 192-3). It was the relationship of an older man with a young boy of different status, and it required that the *eromenos* be educated by the intellectual *erastes* (Foucault, *Sexuality 2*, 193-6). There existed a set of norms defining the behavior and responsibilities of the parties toward each other, including the details of courting. The *erastes* was expected "to show his ardor, and to restrain it, he had gifts to make, services to render; he had functions to exercise with regard to the *eromenos*" while the other "had to be careful not to yield too easily; he also had to keep from accepting too many tokens of love, and from granting his favors heedlessly and out of self-interest without testing the worth of his partner; he must also show gratitude for what the lover had done to him" (Foucault, *Sexuality 2*, 196). Although the love of boys lost its intensity, seriousness and vitality, it was still common and regarded as natural in the first century A.D. (Foucault, *Sexuality 3*, 189), when Petronius was writing.

In the relationship of Encolpius and Giton, however, it is not possible to observe any of these conventions. Encolpius is not a character in a position to teach Giton anything other than trickery and deceit, as neither his character nor his shallow

learning allows that. He uses Giton only as a bedmate and at other times as a slave. On the other hand, Giton yields his favors too easily to whoever asks for them, men and women alike. There is none of the refinement or decorum expected from the relationship of a decent *erastes* and *eromenos* in their relationship.

The story of "The Boy of Pergamum" that Eumolpus tells at the picture gallery as a memory from the past is another example of the transgression of the ideal relationship between an *erastes* and an *eromenos*. The story is a Milesian Tale, a form known for its prose style and salacious content (Courtney, 137; Conte, 105-6), which complies very well with the prevalent tone in *Satyricon* and contributes to the multiplication of the themes that pervade the narrative in general. In this incident, Eumolpus tells how he gained the confidence of the parents of a boy by expressing puritanical views against pederasty and led them to entrust their son to him for his education. He would take the boy to the gymnasium and supervise his studies. He, then, gradually, deceived the boy to yield to his desires with the promise of gifts – in pederasty such exchange of gifts were not uncommon (Foucault, 196; Courtney, 136). One day, as they were reclining on adjacent couches late at night, he pretended to vow to Venus first that he would give the boy a pair of doves if he could kiss the boy without his feeling it. Hearing his promise, the boy pretended to sleep and not to feel him kiss him. Another night, Eumolpus promised to give him two fighting cocks if he could caress him with the same effect, and finally a Macedonian thoroughbred pony if he could get full satisfaction of his desires, again without his noticing. Although he kept his promises for the first two of his promises he did not give the pony as it would have aroused the suspicion of the boy's parents. However, the boy asked him for the pony, thereby revealing that he had known what was happening all along. This encouraged Eumolpus to assault the boy openly the following night. The

boy first threatened Eumolpus by telling what had happened to his father, but did not resist much upon Eumolpus' insistence. Later that night, this time the boy awakened Eumolpus three times and asked for repetition of the intercourse. In the end, Eumolpus had to threaten the boy by saying that he would tell his father.

In this story the relationship of *erastes* to *eromenos* in pederasty is divested of any respectable aspect and presented as a means serving merely the physical satisfaction of the *erastes* and only to the material benefit of the *eromenos*. It is also possible to discern in the subtext the reversal of the sequence of events in *Symposium* in which Alcibiades confesses to having tried to seduce Socrates, first by inviting him over to dinner, keeping him talking until late at night, then persuading him to stay the night and slipping onto his couch as they were reclining on adjacent couches (Courtney, 138). As will be remembered, unlike Eumolpus, Socrates, being the paragon of ethical character, declines Alcibiades's temptations. Here, however, the philosophical ideal is reversed with a humorous tone. Hence, not only here, but in the main story line as well and in every story incorporated, none of the characters comply with the Greek and later Roman ideals of temperance and prudence. On the contrary, with the constant displacement of lovers and repetitious acts of love making, there is an excess of sexual activity, multiplied in the whole of the narrative.

Curiously enough, in *Satyricon*, a narrative devoted to the depiction of erotic desire, the main character Encolpius is inflicted with impotence almost throughout the narrative. This is, however, a strategy employed by Petronius to subvert yet another ideal of his time: epic literature and the dignity of the epic hero. Encolpius' impotence, cause of much frustration and even beating, is interpreted by many scholars as a parody of the epic stories of antiquity, specifically the *Odyssey*, in which the events are set in motion by the wrath of a god who condemns the

protagonists to undergo numerous calamities. This interpretation is based on the parallels observed in both works; both Odysseus and Encolpius are wanderers who go through many adventures and hardship, they are both condemned by the wrath of a god, they both have an adventure with Circe, and so on (Courtney, 152-3; Sullivan, 92). While the misfortunes Odysseus encountered on his way home were caused by the wrath of Poseidon, a superior god, it is implied in *Satyricon* that the sacrilege Encolpius unwittingly commits against the god Priapus in the earlier sections is the reason behind the troubles he has to endure (Arrowsmith, xiii; Sullivan 1986, 17; Sullivan 2001, 260; Heseltine, xvi). The first of the sacrileges Encolpius commits is the above mentioned instance which is supposed to have taken place at the god's shrine in a missing episode and which frustrated his priestess, Quartilla. Toward the end of the narrative, Encolpius again unwittingly provokes the wrath of Priapus by killing a goose, the god's sacred animal, and it is implied that all the misfortunes that befell him, especially his impotence, are actually a curse of Priapus; the punishment this god could give could be nothing other than irrecoverable impotence, the worst punishment for a lecher such as Encolpius. The punishment of an epic hero leads him to more heroic deeds, whereas the punishment of such a god as Priapus leads to humiliation. By choosing to narrate not the story of a hero condemned by one of the superior gods, but, in explicit contradiction to it, the story of an idle ordinary "priapic" man who is destined to suffer at the hands of an inferior god, Petronius desublimates not only the high ideals of philosophy, but also the respectable forms of literature.

In *Satyricon*, the emphasis on erotic desire not only serves the purpose of subverting the ideals of temperance and abstinence in idealist philosophy, but it also reverses the denial of earthly life for the superior one that the soul will lead in

eternity that is inherent in this thinking. Sexuality in itself is an act of affirmation of life, not only because it is the means of procreation, but also because of the relation it has to death at the unconscious level. As explained in the introduction to Part I, the recognition by the subject of its being incomplete and immortal unconsciously results in an orientation to sexuality through which the hope of attaining a feeling of wholeness is realized. Hence, sexuality, *jouissance* lived through it, is an act of transgression, an attempt at defiance of the mortality of the subject. It provides momentary enjoyment of the feeling of wholeness lost with the entry into the symbolic and recognition of the self as a sexed, and therefore mortal, being. Thus, sexuality is not only the transgression of the prohibitions set by the philosophical ideals, but also an affirmation of life through the denial of death.

In *Eroticism*, Bataille analyzes the erotic experience as a means of affirmation of life, although through a different line of thinking, which nevertheless parallels Lacan's. Bataille also associates sexuality, the ecstatic feeling involved in it, which can also be found in mysticism in religions, with death. For him, the ecstatic feeling, because it involves a sense of dissolution of the self, disruption of the boundaries of the self with the external world and the other, brings the individual to the verge of the feeling of death which cannot otherwise be experienced. Hence, Bataille defines the sexual act as a transgression of boundaries, where the self is lost in the other and the two become one. For him, it is the risk of death, coming as close to death as possible by losing the sense of the self and becoming one with the lover that creates the excitement. On the other hand, that a return from the realm beyond the self is guaranteed makes it livable. In that sense, eroticism is both an approach to death and, at the same time, an affirmation of life.

Therefore, both in the Lacanian and Bataillean sense, it is possible to interpret the continual engagement of the characters in sex in *Satyricon* as a valorization of life and body over death and the transcendental. Each time they have sex, they traverse the boundary between the self and the other, approach death and return to life, having gone through utter enjoyment, *jouissance*. The consciousness of inevitable death does not divert the characters' energies to a cultivation of the self as proposed by the dominant discourse on desire, but rather to a celebration of life.

The central character of *Cena*, Trimalchio, is another important character in *Satyricon* and the epitome of this attitude. Trimalchio[19] clings onto life through his desire for the worldly things in defiance of death, whose breath he, nevertheless, feels at his back. Having learnt from an astrologist when he will die, he makes one of his slaves count his remaining days and hours, and announce it regularly. He tries to get the most from life while he has the time by giving or attending dinner parties and enjoying himself to the full. He says "since we know we shall die, why shouldn't we live while we can?" (133). The more he desires life, the world and what it has to offer, the more he consumes. His excessive consumption is an indication of his unconscious desire to redeem himself from the lack that marks his being and ties him to death. By indulging in excess, he hopes that the lack will cease and he will be engulfed by life.

In his "Luxury and Death in the *Satyricon*", Arrowsmith refers to Petronius as the last great witness to the pagan sense of life according to which everything had *numen (*divine presence), and nobody needed eternal life because life itself was good and had god in it. (qtd. in Sullivan 2001, 269). Hence, in opposition to Plato or Aristotle, who situated *noumena*, that is the divine and the beautiful, in the

[19] In *Great Gatsby*, F.S. Fitzgerald refers to Gatsby as Trimalchio and even an earlier version of the novel entitled *Trimalchio* can still be found in print by Cambridge University Pres.

transcendental, in the heaven to which the soul will eventually rise, Petronius saw it on earth, in life, and his characters attest to this understanding.

Trimalchio's feast, *Cena*, is also a parody of Plato's *Symposium* (Conte, 120-1; Courtney, 103-4). In symposiums, the philosophical discussions take place after the banquet, whereas in *Cena* eating and drinking as well as other entertainments continue along with the supposedly intellectual discussions of both the host and the guests. In this way, the boundary separating the realm of the bodily from the realm of the intellectual is transgressed. Although in the *Cena* the content of the discussions does not go beyond being superficial, as Conte explains, *Cena* is not a serious satire about the unlearned men's pretensions of intellectual capacity, as that would require a critical point of view (128). Conte (128-131) and Courtney (91) compare *Cena* with Horace's satire 2.8 where a rich man, Nasidienus, invited a group of learned man for a symposium. In Horace's satire, the intellectuals preserve their superior status with respect to the host and, dissatisfied with his conduct, eventually leave the house. In *Cena*, however, the so-called intellectuals enjoy the meal and do not have an antagonistic relationship with the host, even when he displays utter ignorance. They are overcome by their appetite, which is portrayed as having surpassed every claim for higher ideals. There also seems to be no tone of contempt on the part of the narrator in his narration of the scene. As in the rest of the narrative, the aim here appears both to level the hierarchy created by learning among people at the level of human needs and to denigrate any attempt at sublimation of an ideal.

A similar denigration is observed at many instances where the pains of the soul, in Aristotelian terms, immediately give way to natural needs and desires of the body. For instance, Quartilla's grief caused by Encolpius and his friends' sacrilege

turns immediately into joy and ends with an orgy as soon as they give in to her demands: “This assurance made the lady more cheerful; she covered me with kisses, and, her tears turning into laughter, she gently stroked my flowing curls” (64). Likewise, Encolpius’ grief for losing Giton does not affect his appetite: “However, I did not hug my grief long. … I will avenge my injuries in their guilty blood. With these words I gird I on my sword, and, lest my bodily weakness should impair my fighting vigour, I replenish my strength with an extra big diner” (146-147). Thus, Encolpius manages to buy off the profanation he caused by killing Priapus’ sacred animal goose, and Priapus’ priestess, Oenothea, cooperates with Encolpius to conceal the crime in return for money. Hence, in *Satyricon*, people’s sublime desires immediately give way to more worldly ones.

It is not surprising that the final desire of a debauchee like Eumolpus is to be eaten after his death. This desire, set down in his will, is his final attempt to be engulfed by the body. Lacan explains that every drive is, in essence, reflexive in that it involves a desire to be subject to the act of the drive. In other words, in the scopic drive, the underlying goal is being seen rather that seeing; in the oral drive the main goal is being eaten rather than eating at the unconscious level. Of course, what is implied is the underlying unconscious fantasy. Through the oral drive the subject tries to actualize the unconscious fantasy of being engulfed by the other, becoming one with the other, so that the initial wholeness of the Real can be attained. Because in the narratives of erotic desire, the characters become the embodiments of unconscious desires, just as they enjoy unlimited satisfaction of their desire, which is another way of complementing oneself, it is only to be expected that Eumolpus’s final gesture in life is asking to be eaten. When death sets in as an unavoidable

reality, a life devoted to seeking *jouissance*, reaching beyond language, to the Real, has to end with the equivalent of sex in terms of their underlying object-cause.

In the opposite manner, just as sex is associated with life, the inability to engage in sexual relationship is associated with death. Courtney observes that the characters in *Satyricon* see a relationship, even an identity, between life and sex, death and impotence (224). At one point in the narrative, after failing to have sex with Giton, Encolpius cries out that "I have lost all knowledge and sense of manhood. Dead and buried is that part of me that once made me a very Achilles!" (215). By identifying sex with knowledge, with this exclamation, Encolpius subverts the philosophical ideal of *eros* as love of knowledge. That Encolpius' punishment is impotence is important not only because it helps to subvert the ideals of the epic genre and its heroic protagonists, but also because it relates to theme of affirmation of life through worldly pleasures, especially sex, as well as the refutation of the philosophical *eros*.

As mentioned earlier, not only the main story line, but also the stories incorporated into the narrative contribute to the statement of Petronius' attitude towards erotic desire and life. The other Milesian tale embedded into the story, "The Widow of Ephesus", is another example in which the theme of the affirmation of life is reiterated. A widow who has confined herself to the grave of her deceased husband mourns for her husband and refuses to be consoled. As if attempting a prolonged suicide, she declines to eat anything. As Freud says in "Mourning and Melancholia", mourning is a reaction to the loss of one's object of desire. In grief, the mourners withdraw their libido from the external world and preoccupy themselves with the idea of the lost loved one. Hence, mourning is retrieval from life, a kind of death. Because the object of love is narcissistically tied to the ego by being the reflection of

itself or its ideal, its loss, by death or other, implies the death of a part of oneself. Only after one mourns for the loved one does it become possible for the mourner to emerge out of grief and invest the libido on the real life and a new love-object.

By mourning at the grave and refusing to eat anything, the widow of the tale has retired from life both literally and metaphorically. On the other hand, first by conceding to eat something, and then allowing herself to be seduced by a soldier, the widow turns her face to life and decides to cling to it. The initial surrender to temptation is soon carried to its extreme by repeated acts of love making and by turning the grave into a house where she and the soldier live a relationship as husband and wife. The final gesture of crucifying her dead husband in place of the stolen body of the criminal to save her beloved is the ultimate sign of her affirmation of life. She says "Rather would I that the dead should hang than send a living man to his death" (193).

As McGlathery states "[t]he removal of the husband's body to the cross marks the symbolic crucifixion of the ideals of human asceticism and marital fidelity; but at the same time this action averts the transformation of the tomb into complete shrine of death and instead converts it into a household with only living beings within" (332). Hence, again, sexuality is asserted as being not only the bond that ties the widow to life, but also a means of subverting the social order, which is caused by irreverence to the dead, a major sin in antiquity; via *jouissance*, the Law is transgressed. *Jouissance* causes further transgressions, as, by engaging in a sexual relationship with a soldier of lower class and living with him in the tomb - which is, as McGlathery points out a cave, a proper place for prostitutes to have sex (330) - both the widow and the soldier disrupt the order of society. Moreover, the spatial concentration of elements of belonging to the aspect of life denied by the

philosophers of idealism (death, food, drink and sex) in the tomb of the dead husband represents the destruction of the boundaries that normally separate the various aspects of human existence into hierarchical structures (McGlathery, 332).

Some critics observe a parallel between the scene of this Milesian tale, where the maid persuades her mistress to let the soldier seduce her and the scene in *Aeneid* where Dido's maid persuades her to give in to Aeneas' love (McGlathery, 325; Courtney, 172). The epic seduction ends in Dido's death: the woman who has been unfaithful to the memory of her husband and dared to seek her own desire is destined to pay for it with her death. [20] This, however, is the tragic point of view. In *Satyricon*, on the other hand, the return to life by the widow does not meet such condemnation, although what happens to the couple in the end is not narrated. The story ends in a way that implies that this is a happy ending without the widow and the soldier discovered in their transgressions. Once again, life and erotic desire is affirmed, and this ties in with opposition to the ideals of tragedy.

In *Satyricon*, Petronius' depiction of characters and use of plot and the manner in which he parodies certain genres, all serve the purpose of creating a social order in which the hierarchies are disturbed; any attempts at sublimation of desire by orientation toward the transcendental is disrupted by indulgence in all means of physicality. Every claim for an ideal is inverted by a subsequent surrender to the forces of desire. As Conte says, "[b]ody, food, sex and money are the forces that Petronius musters to demystify the pretense of the false sublime in the *Satyricon*" (105).

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[20] Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz discusses examples of female protagonists who, daring to pursue their desires, erotic and other, are punished almost without exception in tragedies form Antiquity in her article "Tragedy and the Politics of Containment".

Instead of desiring to achieve the ideal, the beautiful and the good, Encolpius, his friends and almost every other person they encounter on the way are indulged in lechery, gluttony, self-aggrandizement and many other immoral acts including theft, fraud and torture. Their orientation to excess does not necessarily stem from a need that requires immediate satisfaction but is rather marked with the insatiability of their desire. Unable to sublimate their desire for the physical, they keep displacing their objects of desire with the next available. Hence, Petronius' narrative, *Satyricon*, is not a valorization of the high ideals of society, of philosophy and literature but a celebration of life and erotic desire.

CHAPTER IV

DESIRE CHRISTIANIZED / DESIRE SECULARIZED: READING BOCCACCIO'S *DECAMERON* AGAINST THE PHILOSOPHY OF ST.AUGUSTINE AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Throughout the Medieval period, Christianity was, undoubtedly, the dominant discourse, and it also determined the attitude towards erotic desire. Christianity, having begun to spread rapidly in the first and second centuries A.D., became the official religion of Rome in the fourth century. In this patristic age, the period of the church fathers, the church had to develop rules and institutions to minister its vastly increasing members (Colish, 16). All the church fathers of the time, except St. Jerome, had congregations to serve; therefore, their writings on Christianity were not merely indulgence in their intellectual tastes but had the purpose of guiding their congregations (Colish, 17). Hence, Canon Law began to take shape about the beginning of the second century, and the church began to enunciate and define norms about the right way of living, including sexual behavior, from the fourth century onwards (Brundage, 33-34).

In the Medieval Period, there were two main sources that constituted the basis for the Christian discourse of desire. The most important was Christian philosophy that evolved from the interpretations of the Bible by the church fathers, who combined their knowledge of rhetoric and the philosophy of antiquity with Christian learning. Secondly, based on the former, but prepared for more practical

use, were the penitentials[21] and summas[22] for confessors (Prayer, 3-10). In these, sex matters would be discussed under five major rubrics: vices and virtues, the Ten Commandments, the sacraments, the five senses, and reserved sins. Among the most common sins of sexuality were simple fornication, adultery, incest, vices against nature – by which was meant homosexuality, bestiality and the use of inanimate objects – violations of virgins, rape and abduction (Prayer, 12-13). However, contrary to the common belief that in the Christian era all sexual acts outside marriage were regarded as sin, the pastoral and confessional literatures indicate that from the twelfth to the fourteenth century "simple fornication" was not that grave a sin compared to adultery, incest, and sins against nature. As in antiquity, there was a calendar that prescribed certain days of the week as well as periods of the year (such as just before Christmas) and religious festivals as inappropriate times for sexual intercourse. Moreover, it was considered inapropriate to have sex during the day time and under certain circumstances like a the woman's menstruation, breastfeeding and pregnancy, as well as in some positions – actually any position other than the one known as "the missionary position" was considered unnatural (Brundage, 36). Abstinence from sex, which was formerly required of monks and nuns, was posited as the norm for all clerics by the authorities in the second half of the 11th century and, after two hundred years of struggle, it became the established norm (Brundage, 37).

Such strict regulation of sexuality was a consequence of the Christian conception of body, soul and the divine, which was also influenced by the idealism of Platonism and Aristotle's philosophy. In Christianity, the sublime object of desire is God, and the goal of life is attainment of his grace through submission to his Word. Hence, the ideal *eros*, love of knowledge, of antiquity gives way to *agape*,

[21] list of sins and their penances, commonly used from sixth to eleventh century.
[22] for the education of clergy, from twelfth to fourteenth century.

God's love. Although *agape* can also be translated as love, it is different from *eros*. The French feminist theoretician and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, in her book *Tales of Love* where she explores the unconscious mechanisms of the evolution of the objects of love throughout the history, explains that *eros*

> rose toward the desired object or supreme Wisdom. Agape, on the contrary, inasmuch as it is identified with God, comes down; it is gift, welcome and favor. … agape is disinterested, less a choice than benevolent generosity, a fatherhood that isn't stern but familial and enlightening. … the inaugural gift … consists … in the sacrifice of a body … the body of Christ, of the son. Love is accomplished by means of a death… (141)

God's love for humanity led him to sacrifice His son for humanity, by which act man regained the hope of reaching God after death via resurrection.

Kristeva associates the religious sentiment that leads to a conceptualization of the death of God's son with the psychological identification process involved in "[t]he bond that any religion establishes between the divinity and its believers" because "[t]here is no idealizing identification without the murder of the loved object" (*Love*, 143). For the fulfillment of the idealizing identification, another body, one's own body has to be killed to be able to identify with the God, the Son (*Love*, 143-4). The idea of identification with the body of God, the Son, is already found in the Bible: "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Ephesians 5:30). Hence, Kristeva states, "[i]nhabited by Christ, 'adopted' by the Father, the believer puts to death only his sinful body, on the path that leads him to agape" (*Love*, 144). She also argues that "[s]uch an accepted death is the high point of negative narcissism carried to its limit (accepted death), and that doubtless explains why such an activity of narcissistic satisfaction (negative as it may be) could lead to imaginary salvation" (*Love*, 145), salvation from the position of effaced

subjectivity(S) to the position of Subject by identification with God, attaining a position that equals Him.

Using Lacanian terms, Kristeva explains that “killing of the body is the path through which the body-Self has access to the Name of the Other” (*Love*, 146), partaking of its divinity. That is why Lacan says “in loving God, people love themselves!!!”. Interestingly enough, the self same idea can be found in St. Aquinas’ writings, about five hundred years earlier: "The object loved is in the lover; by the conception of the Word, the object spoken of or understood is in the intelligent agent" (*Summa* 1a.27.3, 149). Thus, the idealization of God and identification with his divinity necessitated killing the body by denying every worldly pleasure, and most of all erotic desire felt for the human body.

However, the undeniable fact that sexuality was part of the natural order and necessary for the continuation of the generations posed practical problems to be solved (Brundage, 37-38). Thus, starting with St. Ambrose, all church fathers and Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages, despite their preference for celibacy, had to leave room for sexuality in their writings as it was necessary for the continuation of generations. Therefore, they allowed for it only for the purposes of procreation, but not without laying down rules for the acceptable conduct of the experience. The rules were determined first and foremost by considering whether a certain sexual act was in compliance with or against nature. While every detail pertaining to the sexual experience was prescribed, any deviation from the normative sexual performance was shunned as being unnatural.

The denial of the body, on the other hand, gave rise to another problem, that of resurrection, as the Bible foresaw a bodily resurrection after death. As early as St.Paul, the church fathers had to attribute a different significance to the body. In the

Bible, St.Paul addressed this question in his letters to the Corinthians and the Ephesians, developing a conception of the body based on the notion of the Body of Christ (Heckel, 122); in the Bible Christ's "body is the instrument of the Word". The Pauline conception of the body is based on this premise, arguing the Christian community itself to be a body, which is the instrument of the Word, to which he gives precedence over the individual body (Heckel, 122-9). He does not maintain the Platonic division of the soul and body where the body is considered merely as a prison. Therefore, he does not regard sin simply as a phenomenon of the body but as the use of the body by man in a way not in compliance with God's Word (Heckel, 124). For him, there is no bodiless existence – Christ died body and soul on the crucifix – by which idea, the Christian body loses its carnality but remains an instrument, as spiritual body, as a body ideally subservient to spirit (Heckel, 125). Existence, which relied on one's being the agent of one's actions guided by reason in antiquity, is replaced by an understanding of existence that is not a consequence of what one does, but a consequence of his/her submission to God's Word (Heckel, 126).

Thus, the body is not totally degraded, but should be used in accordance with God's Word to be worthy of *agape*. It says in the Bible,

> You must not love this passing world or anything that is in the world. The love of the Father cannot be in any man who loves the world, because nothing the world has to offer – the sensual body, the lustful eye, pride in possession – could ever come from the Father but only form the world" (1 John 2:15-16).

Hence, the early church fathers preached celibacy as the prime ideal.

St. Ambrose, who was himself celibate – although there was yet no official ban on marriage for clergy –, praised celibacy (Colish, 19). He encouraged virginity and widowhood without denigrating marriage, and preached people to respect the

wishes of virgins and widows and not to force them into unwanted marriages (Colish, 20). Among the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, justice and temperance, he pointed to temperance as paramount, and determined faith, hope and charity as the Christian virtues (Colish, 21).

St. Jerome was more radical than St. Ambrose in his view about sexuality and the use of one's body. Because of his intense discomfort with his own body, he followed a rigorous ascetic regime and considered fondness of food and cleanliness of body as sins as severe as sexuality for their being temptations for sin. He considered sexuality not as a continuation of original creation but as part of the punishment for the sin of the primal parents, Adam and Eve, since if they had not sinned, he believed, human beings could procreate without the need for sexual union. For St .Jerome, marriage is a concession to weakness, and sexuality has no redeeming feature other than procreation (Colish, 23). He went so far as to argue that the husband who loved his wife too passionately was an adulterer (Brundage, 39).

St. Augustine is the most important church father in the early Christian period. Like the other church fathers, he also denounced sexual laxity and set basic tenets about sexual morality, basing his argument principally on the original sin as a result of which human beings were destined to be mortal and lose the friendship of God. For him, sex is a depraved craving that human beings must overcome if they ever want to merit salvation and the friendship of God in the afterlife (Brundage, 35). However, Augustine's importance lies not simply in his views about erotic desire, but in his comprehensive philosophy of Christian faith.

It is commonly accepted that it was Augustine - before Descartes - that discussed the capacity of the mind to know itself. Augustine had a new argument for mind-body dualism. From the proposition that the mind knows itself, he arrives at the

conclusion that the mind, the rational soul, is incorporeal (Matthews, 137) through a convoluted reasoning. However, he cannot conclusively resolve the question why the soul needs the body for resurrection (Matthews, 142). He can only suggest that it is "because of some mysterious reason or simply because of the fact that it possesses a natural appetite for managing the body" (qtd. in Matthews, 142), which is, given his elaborate discussion to prove the incorporeality of the mind, far from being convincing. It was St. Thomas Aquinas, who, centuries later, resolved the question by adapting Aristotle's metaphysics and defining the human soul not as an independent substance from the body, but as having a certain independence from it, which he calls a "subsistent thing" (*Summa* I aq75a2, 364-5). This partial independence requires that, in resurrection, the soul be united with the body to attain completeness. (Matthews, 143)

The concept of the soul, while preserving its status as being superior to the body, also continues to be the seat of wisdom and rational thinking in Christian philosophy. For Augustine, human being is the totality of a body and soul, the rational soul being the closest to God in nature (Matthews, 144). Like Aristotle's, Augustine's ethics is based on the premise that the ultimate goal in life is happiness. However, being happy is possible neither by searching for truth, as the philosophers of antiquity had proclaimed, nor by simply living according to reason and mind, but living "as God lives"; "to attain happiness … our mind should not be self-contented but should be subjected to God" (qtd. in Matthews, 144). As a true idealist, he postpones the prospect of being happy to the afterlife: "On earth we are happy, after a fashion, when we enjoy the peace, little as it is, which a good life brings; but such happiness compared with the beatitude which is our end in eternity is, in point of

fact, misery" (qtd. in Matthews, 144). Hence, in loving God and total submission to his Word, it is possible to attain happiness in afterlife.

Likewise, Aquinas associates the soul with intellectual activity and adds that it is subsistent (i.e it can exist independent of the body): "It is necessary to say that that which is the principle of intellective activity, what we say call the soul of a human being, is an incorporeal, subsistent principle" (*Summa* Ia752c, 364). While intellectual activity is important in determining the correct way of living in life and understanding God, for Aquinas, true happiness is to be drawn from union and eternal fellowship with God. He proposes this goal be achieved through what he calls the beatific vision: seeing and understanding the very essence of God which gives one perfect and eternal happiness: "… man obtains [happiness] by many movements of works which are called merits. Wherefore also according to the Philosopher (Ethic. i, 9), happiness is the reward of works of virtue" (*Summa* II.I 5.7, 614). Elsewhere, he adds:

> Nor again is it possible for us with our bodily face to see God, since the bodily sense of sight, implanted in our face, can be only of bodily things. Thus then shall we see God face to face, in that we shall have an immediate vision of Him, as of a man whom we see face to face. By this vision we are singularly assimilated to God, and are partakers in His happiness: for this is His happiness, that He essentially understands His own substance. Hence it is said: *When He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is* (i John iii, 2). And the Lord said: *I prepare for you as my Father hath prepared for me a kingdom, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom* (Luke xxii, 29). This cannot be understood of bodily meat and drink, but of that food which is taken at the table of Wisdom, whereof it is said by Wisdom: *Eat ye my bread and drink the wine that I have mingled for you* (Prov. ix, 5). They therefore eat and drink at the table of God, who enjoy the same happiness wherewith God is happy, seeing Him in the way which He sees Himself. (*Gentiles*)

Thus, perfect and eternal happiness is not possible simply through sense perception and reason; such vision can be achieved through the right conduct one maintains in life and awarded in afterlife.

According to the Christian theology, this happiness achieved through union with God is actually a return to what the human being lost with the Fall. The mortal life on earth, with all the deficiency and misery that accompany it, are the punishment for the original sin Adam and Eve committed in Paradise while they enjoyed the eternal friendship of God. Not only death, but also sex is conceived as related to the original sin in Christianity. It is only after the original sin that Adam and Eve recognize each other as sexual beings and feel ashamed of their nakedness. As part of the punishment for transgressing the Law, they lose their privilege of being immortal and living with the friendship of God. Moreover, as St. Jerome stated, they are "doomed" to have sex to procreate.

It is interesting to note the similarity between the association of sex with death in Christianity and in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. As stated earlier, Lacan also argues that it is with the recognition of the self as mortal and sexual that the subject loses its feeling of wholeness and immortality. This is also another indication of how the human psyche seeks the original state of the Real in the discourses created, through the sublime ideal. Ironically, while Lacan identifies sexuality to be a consequence of the subject's unconscious orientation to the lost feeling of completeness characteristic of the Real, Christianity takes a completely different route, putting up with sexuality only to the degree that it cannot avoid. This is, in a sense, the revenge of the Real, its return from the unconscious to manifest itself implicitly through the discourse that tries to repress it for good.

No matter how hard Christianity tried to repress erotic desire, pleasure of worldly things and life with its promise for eternal happiness in the afterlife, so long as it constituted the Law, it was transgressed via *jouissance*, in life and in narrative.

Decameron, in which Boccacio undermines almost every aspect of Christian teaching, is perhaps the best known narrative of erotic desire from the Middle Ages.

As it was the case in *Satyricon*, there does not seem to be agreement among the scholars about the real intention of Boccaccio in composing a book of one hundred tales narrated in a frame story, most of which appear to be quite obscene and even sacrilegious considering their subject matter. Although, *Decameron* was received as scandalous at the time it was written, later scholars, studying the work as a whole and observing a certain design in the structure of the narrative, detected different intentions beneath the overt erotic content. In the comprehensive introduction he wrote to his translation of the *Decameron* into English, McWilliam explains that many critics interpret the sequence of tales to be a movement from villainy to saintliness, from vice to virtue, and point out the narrative's structural affinity with Dante's *Divine Comedy*, [23] and classified *Decameron* as the "Human Comedy" due to its ethical messages (xlii-xliii). For McWilliam, this attitude is typical of recent criticism, especially in America, which has tended to assert that Boccaccio is more attached to conventional Christian morality than is popularly thought (lxxx). Whether as a purposefully scandalous book, or as a narrative that has covert moralizing intentions, critics have attempted to find a univocal abstract meaning, or derive generalized conclusions through their episodic studies of the *Decameron* (Mazzotta, 6). Calabrese argues that it is even possible to find evidence to support any literary theory by selecting certain tales from *Decameron*, which may easily be contradicted by the use of other tales (258).

For centuries, what has made it difficult to ascertain a single attitude overarching the whole work has been what Mazzotta calls "Boccaccio's ambivalence

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[23] Like The Divine Comedy, *Decameron* contains hundred cantos divided into three sections (McWilliam, XLIII; Wallace, 14)

too well-known in history" (4). The use of puns, allusions and allegories that are open to a variety of interpretations, as well as the critics' tendency to read into the text what they assume to be Boccaccio's "real" intention, render *Decameron* elusive in terms of any conclusive deductions. In fact, Boccaccio himself purposefully contributes to the ambivalence of meaning inherent in his text, while leaving the responsibility for the accusation of being obscene and scandalous to the reader. In the Epilogue, he argues that:

> No word, however pure, was ever wholesomely construed by a mind that was corrupt. And just as seemly language leaves no mark upon a mind that is corrupt, language that is less than seemly cannot contaminate a mind that is well ordered, any more than mud will sully the rays of the sun, or earthly filth the beauties of the heaven. (800)

Thus, he acquits himself of the charge of being blasphemous and obscene, claiming that it is the reader's interpretation, i.e. reading into the text what is not there, which makes the text appear as such. However, although there are instances where Boccaccio can be right in his assertion, it would be naive to claim that all the erotic and religiously subversive content in the text is the reader's construction *ex nihilo*.

Boccaccio' use of doubletalk is like over-determination in dream-work[24], where the ulterior content of the unconscious, which is the realm of the imaginary and hence fantasy, is overlaid by meanings to conceal the otherwise subversive desire. While the overt content can be interpreted as having one meaning, the implicit but intended meaning has subversive overtones which sometimes only the learned, but most of the time any reader, can grasp. For instance, in his defense in the epilogue, Boccaccio argues that he should be allowed to enjoy the liberty that an artist has, sometimes drawing Christ nailed to the Cross with a single nail, and

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[24] Freud explains in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* that "dreams are arranged in superimposed layers" which makes the interpretation of dreams more delicate and interesting (312)

sometimes two. As McWilliam notes, the word Boccaccio uses for nail has strong sexual connotations in Italian, quite close to blasphemy (lxx). Hence, in *Decameron*, language functions like desire, in which the overt object is different from the Real unconscious one, the *objet a*.

The double talk that characterizes Boccaccio's narrative style has led scholars to a variety of interpretations of the *Decameron*, the significance of which will be discussed below. It can be argued that, with its repetitions of transgressive acts, narrations of excessive erotic desire that contradict the social norms and Christian teaching dominant at the time, inversions of the prevalent concepts of love and desire in the prominent writers' works, especially Petrarch and Dante's[25], *Decameron* is intentionally subversive. Moreover, an analysis of how every tale contributes to the general attitude underlying the totality of the narrative reveals that, throughout the narrative, Boccaccio confronts the Christian with the secular, temperance with excess, the ideal of celibacy with indulgence in sex, death with life, philosophical thinking with common wisdom, and the intellectual and the religious with the natural. He displaces *agape* with physical love, and the sublime object of desire, God, with the human body.

Boccaccio's intention of secularizing the Christian discourse, especially of desire, is overt first and foremost in his choice of the title for his work. Many critics have noted the allusion in the title *Decameron* to the title Hexaemeron given to certain patristic texts about God's six days of work in Genesis (McWilliam, lvii; Wallace, 13; Mazzotta, 53). Mazzotta interprets the alteration of the religiously significant six days to ten days – ten being the number for temporal perfection – to

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[25] For a detailed study of elements of parody and allusions to The Divine Comedy, see Mazzotta's *The World at Play In Boccaccio's Decameron* and McWilliam' introduction to the Penguin edition of the *Decameron*.

be a sign of Boccaccio's intention of secularizing his title (53). Observing the allusion, McWilliam states that "[t]he contrast in subject matter between the two works could hardly be more pronounced, and it lends to the title of Boccacio's book subtle irony, almost certainly intentional in origin" (lvii).

The second title Boccaccio gave to his work is Prince Galahalt. Wallace explains that this second title alludes to the king, originally an enemy of King Arthur, who arranged for Queen Guinevere to meet Lancelot and then urged her to kiss him. Also, in Dante's Inferno V, which leads to Paolo and Francesca embracing and Francesca being condemned to be blown and buffeted by a wind, Francesca curses the book and says "Galeotto was the book and he who wrote it" (14). The reason Boccaccio calls the book Prince Galahalt is that he intends the book to serve as a go-between (Mazzotta, 56; Kuhns, 728, Thompson, 138), in a sense a temptress encouraging readers to pursue their desires. Kuhns also argues that "[w]hile in the *Decameron* sexual events and descriptions have a metaphoric power and intention, they are to be enjoyed as erotic in their own right, but also to lead us, as a go-between might do, from the sexual to serious, thoughtful ideas, concepts, and principles" (723). Hence, whatever Boccaccio may claim his intention to be in the sections where he addresses the readers directly, his titles announce his real intention, at least to the learned reader.

In *Decameron*, Boccaccio addresses the reader directly in three different places: in the Prologue, in the introduction to Day IV and, as seen above, in the Epilogue. In each, he discusses matters concerning love and his reasons for, and strategies in, writing *Decameron*. In the Prologue, he tells the reader how he loved a lady and suffered from this unrequited love, thus alluding to the courtly love tradition. However, despite his assertion that it was "a most lofty and noble love", his

passion diminished "of its own accord" in time as "all earthly things should come to an end". The tone in which he narrates his love, and the way he dismisses it as having abated afterwards, stands in contradiction to how a lover is expected to feel about his love in the courtly love tradition. [26] The ensuing tales in *Decameron* also testify to Boccaccio's philosophy of love based on natural erotic desire and passion as opposed to the passionate but decorous love of courtly love and *agape*, the religious love of Christianity.

The Prologue continues with Boccaccio's explanation of his intention as a writer in composing a book like *Decameron*. He proclaims his main motivation to be to console those who are afflicted with unrequited love, especially the ladies who suffer from melancholia. He says that, although men can find means to occupy themselves and forget about their suffering, living in subordination to the parents' and male rule, women have almost no means of engaging their minds with other occupations in order to forget about their desolation.

His stories, however, are not for women who are not in love and who can occupy themselves with handiwork. They are for those who are capable of feeling passionate love as he claims himself to have suffered at the beginning of the prologue:

> For the ladies, out of fear and shame, conceal the flames of passion within their fragile breasts … I intend to provide succor and diversion for the

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[26] In the courtly love tradition, the lover's passion for his lady does not diminish when it is unreciprocated. On the contrary, despite instances of consummation, courtly love is ideally platonic. The lover's feelings and treatment of his lady is like worship and even frequently told in religious vocabulary. Sarah Kay gives the example of perhaps the best known courtly love affair of romances, between Queen Guinevere and Lancelot: "and then he came to the queen's bed, and worships and bows before her, for there is no holy relic in which he has greater faith … When he rose he was just like a martyr, so sorry was he to leave since it makes him suffer such great martyrdom" lines 4651-53, 4689-91 (82).

> ladies, but only for those who are not in love, since the others can make do with their needles, their reels and their spindles. (2-3)

Boccaccio also adds that he also hopes to educate these ladies by giving advice:

> In reading [the tales], the aforesaid ladies will be able to derive, not only pleasure from the entertaining matters therein set forth, but also some useful advice. For they will learn to recognize what should be avoided and likewise what should be pursued… (3)

If he can manage to divert the ladies' attention from their suffering and provide beneficial learning, they are to thank not the writer or God but Love, since this is what enabled Boccaccio to write in the first place: "If this should happen … let them give thanks to Love, which, in freeing me from its bonds, has granted me the power of making provision for their pleasures" (3). Hence, Boccaccio pronounces his book to be devoted to love, occasioned by love, intended to cure the wounds of love, and to teach the ways of love. However, as is soon revealed, the type of love Boccaccio has in mind is neither the love Dante and Petrarch write about, nor the love the readers of the time know from the romances. Boccaccio's love is earthly love, pursuing the satisfaction of erotic desire in the body of the beloved, which is only natural for him.

The Introduction to Day I starts as a continuation of the prologue, where Boccaccio addresses the reader with the words "fairest ladies" – as his target audience are supposedly women – and urges them not to give up reading because the narrative starts with the unpleasant description of the plague that inflicted most of Europe as well as Florence, setting the background for the journey the *lieta brigata*[27] takes into the country. He, then, moves on to narrate the historical details of the time in which the frame story of *Decameron* takes place:

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[27] The group of seven ladies and three men who tell the hundred tales in *Decameron* are traditionally referred to as "*lieta brigata*", meaning the happy band (McWilliam, XLII).

> I say, then, that the sum of thirteen hundred and forty-eight years had elapsed since the fruitful Incarnation of the Son of God, when the noble city of Florence, which for its great beauty excels all others in Italy, was visited by the deadly pestilence. Some say that it descended upon the human race through the influence of the heavenly bodies, others that it was a punishment signifying God's righteous anger at our iniquitous way of life. But whatever its cause, it had originated some years earlier in the East, where it had claimed countless lives before it unhappily spread westward, growing in strength as it swept relentlessly on from one place to the next. (5)

Mazzotta draws our attention to the juxtaposition of the Incarnation of Christ's body, which was a symbol of the redemption of the body, with the bodily decay brought about by the plague at the beginning of the description of the plague (18).

This juxtaposition is significant in that the concept of the body in Christianity, as explained earlier, is closely associated with the body of Christ, his crucifixion and resurrection. While Christianity necessitates the negligence of body, its metaphorical death, the fact of its physical presence as a suffering entity remains. Moreover, following this juxtaposition with the insinuation that plague might be a punishment by God, though it may also be a natural phenomenon, is ironic in relation to the conception of a benevolent Christian God who sacrificed His Son for the salvation of humanity. Some critics even inferred from the statement that the epidemic started in the East as Boccaccio is actually referring to the spread of Christianity, which is for him a force that metaphorically occasioned the death of the body (Mazzotta, 19).

The prologue continues with the description of the effects of the plague on people's bodies and on the society. While the plague deforms bodies, it also deforms people's sense of morality. In the face of impending death, people either forgot the rules of decorum and decency and let others see their bodies with the hope that they may help, or started to enjoy themselves heedless of the rules of society, knowing

that they will die soon – the implication being that people behave in "civilized" fashion only because they have to comply with the rules of the Other. The background of the frame story, a plague stricken Florence, constitutes a sharp contrast to the following tales of erotic desire and point at the function of tales of affirming life as opposed to death.

It is the plague that occasions the journey of seven women to the country side with three men, a journey that will constitute the frame story of *Decameron*. One of the measures people took to save themselves from the plague was fleeing to their country houses. Therefore, seven ladies meet at the church of Santa Maria to decide that they should leave the city for the countryside for a while. However, traveling alone would be considered inappropriate. One of the ladies, Elissa, says: "It is certainly true that man is the head of woman, and that without a man to guide us it rarely happens that any enterprise of ours is brought to a worthy conclusion" (17). Elissa'a statement is an overt allusion to St. Paul's epistles to the Ephesians: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." (5:22-24). However, the allusion is meant to be sardonic, since, as Wallace also states, it is the women who plan and control the whole proceeding of the journey although three men accompany them throughout the journey (23). It is ironic that Boccaccio secularizes St. Paul's vision of order at the church (Mazzotta, 55).

In addition, their meeting place, the church of Santa Maria Novella, [28] is also significant in that it is the place where Iacopo Passavanti, at the height of the plague, delivered a series of sermons urging his audience to give up worldly delights and lead an ascetic life to save their souls (Mazzotta, 54). However, *Decameron* is an open defiance of this dictum, starting with the *brigata* (Cassell 92). Although it is frequently stated that the *brigata* remains chaste, they still make the most of worldly pleasures. During their stay in the country, they feast, relax, bathe in the lakes, dance and sing; it is not for nothing that they are called "*lieta brigata*", the happy band.

Thus, beginning from the frame story and continuing in the tales, Decameron is a narrative that celebrates life. Even the names of the members of the *brigata* are suggestive, first and foremost for their being related to love and life energy. [29] To spend time happily and forget about the plague, the *brigata* forbids their servants to bring bad news from the outside world and decides to tell tales every day; one of them will be the queen or the king of the day and choose a theme on which each one of them will tell a tale so that, at the end of the ten days they plan to stay in the country, they will have told a hundred stories.

Decameron opens with the tale of the arch-villain Ser Cepperello. Although this tale is one of those that does not deal with erotic desire, being the first tale of the narrative and the one that sets Boccaccio's conception of language and his attitude to

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[28] McWilliam also suggests that the reason why Boccaccio chose this church could be the allusion in the name of the church to tales in Italian novellas. (804-805)

[29] The names of four of the ladies are from Boccaccio's earlier works: Pampinea meaning "full of vigour" from his *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*; Fiametta meaning "little flame" from his *Elegia*; Filomena meaning "the beloved" or "lover of song" from his *Filostrato*; Emilia meaning "she who allures" from his *Teseida* (McWilliam lxxii). The names of the other three are from the works of well-known writers: Elissa is a variant of Virgil's Dido (McWilliam lxxii; Wallace, 23); Neifile meaning "newly enamored" is from Dante's poems (McWilliam lxxii); Lauretta is a diminutive of Petrarch's beloved Laura (McWilliam lxxii; Wallace, 24). The gentlemen of the brigata also have names associated with love: Panfilo means "all loving"; Filastrato means "defeated by love" and Dioneo's name is based on Homer's legend about Aphrodite's being the daughter of Dione and Zeus in Illiad (McWilliam lxxii).

confession as a religious practice, it has implications for the rest of the work. Ser Cepperello is a non-believer with a past filled with wicked deeds. He falls mortally ill at a house where he is staying as a guest. His hosts fear that he will die at their house and, because they know his notorious past, they can neither let him confess before he dies nor be so mean as to throw him out of the house and leave him to his fate. An atheist, Ser Cepperello solves their problem by deceiving a holy friar with a false confession. He not only receives absolution, but is also reputed to be a saint, Saint Ciapelletto, after his death. With this opening tale, Boccaccio questions "the problem of the truth of language, its proliferation and contagiousness, its use and role in history" (Mazzotta, 60).

The belief that Christ is the incarnation of the Word is, in a sense, the guarantee of meaning in language and its truth value. Confession is not simply a means of control over society, but a sign of faith in language since, otherwise, receiving absolution through speech would be meaningless. In introducing a lie into confession and thereby elevating a villain to the status of saint, Boccaccio's aim is not only "to degrade and parody the confessional form", as Mazzotta says (61), but also to mock the sublime ideals of Christianity, which is infamous for its history of false relics and saints that spread by way of language. Hence, with his protagonist deceiving the friar and manipulating language to create a reality that everyone believes to be true, Boccaccio undermines the trust in the potential of language to convey the truth. Having proclaimed distrust in language, and thereby a negation of the symbolic, Boccaccio moves into the pre-symbolic, the realm of the imaginary and hence fantasies, where his protagonists enjoy continuous satisfaction of desire, or *jouissance*.

Tales II/7 [30] and III/1 testify to Boccaccio's constitution of the pre-symbolic as the site of *jouissance*. Boccaccio introduces tale II/7 with the following words:

> The Sultan of Babylon sends his daughter off to marry the King of Algarve. Owing to a series of mishaps, she passes through the hands of nine men in various places within the space of four years. Finally, having been restored to her father as a virgin, she sets off, as before, to become the King of Algarve's wife.

Boccaccio's characteristic doubletalk is evident in the introduction to the tale, where he states that the girl Alatiel returns to her father's palace as a virgin, although she has actually slept with all nine men. Because all nine men who Alatiel encounters throughout the tale are from other lands and cannot speak her language, Alatiel's relation with them is marked with silence from the very start. Her inability to communicate with them forces her into an exclusively and excessively carnal relationship with them (Marcus, 6). McWilliam states that although the name Alatiel is fictitious, it is an anagram of *La Lieta*, the happy woman, pointing at the meaning the tale is intended to convey (816).

As soon as Alatiel gives in to the first man, Pericone, who saves her from the ship wrecked in the storm, she discovers the kind of "bliss" erotic desire can offer to a woman:

> She had no conception of the kind of horn that men do their butting with, and when she felt what was happening, it was almost as though she regretted having turned a deaf ear to Pericone's flattery, and could not see why she had waited for an invitation before spending her nights so agreeably. For it was she herself who was now issuing the invitation, and she did so several times over. (130)

Subsequently, each time Alatiel is separated from one man, she is quickly consoled by the sexual satisfaction the next lover can give her. For instance, she grieves

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[30] The Roman numerals designate the day on which the tale is told and the numbers after the slash the sequence of the tale on the stated day.

immensely when Pericone's brother, Marato, who being infatuated with her beauty, kills Pericone and kidnaps her, "[b]ut Marato, with the Heaven-sent-assistance of Saint Stiffen-in-the-Hand, began consoling her to such good effect that she soon returned his affection and forgot all about Pericone" (131).

The same scenario is reiterated, with slight differences, with the following seven men, until Alatiel comes across one of her father's men, Antigono, in Cyprus. Antigono is the first man Alatiel has met in years that can speak her language. Her return to language marks the end of the possibilities of enjoying unlimited *jouissance* and a return to the rules of the Name-of-the-Father. Alatiel will now go back to her father's country and must devise an acceptable version of the events that she had been through. She and Antigono concoct the story that she had joined a convent of nuns who worshipped "Saint Stiffen-in-the-Hollows to whom the women of that country are deeply devoted" (145). It is, of course, impossible not to realize the phallic metaphor in both Saint Stiffen-in-the-Hand and Saint Stiffen-in-the-Hollows, [31] both of whom Alatiel confesses to having worshipped, which, ironically, of course, true.

With this story, Alatiel and Antigono make the king believe that she remained virtuous, and, later, the King of Algarve believes that she is still a virgin. Boccaccio writes "… despite the fact that eight separate men had made love to her on thousands of different occasions, she entered his bed as a virgin and convinced him that it was really so" (147). Although, with the recovery of language, Alatiel seems to submit to the Name-of-the-Father, the transgressive potential of *jouissance* continues to undermine the authority of the Law. To this end, it is Antigono, most

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[31] McWilliam also notes that Saint Stiff-in-the,Hollow, commonly used by humorous poets of the time, was the actual name of a sanctuary in Mugello, a mountainous region north-east of Florence (816).

probably intended to be a male derivative of the name Antigone, one of the arch-rebels against the Law in literature, who helps her.

In the first story of the third day, on the other hand, we have a male protagonist, who enjoys unlimited *jouissance*, made possible only by the help of the mask of dumbness, a silence that he hides behind. Boccaccio summarizes the main plot of the tale simply in his introduction: "Masetto of Lamporecchio pretends to be dumb, and becomes a gardener at a convent, where all nuns combine forces to take him off to bed with them" (192). Before he begins to tell the story, however, the narrator, Filastrato, remarks on human nature, especially feminine nature, and the religion's ignorant treatment of it:

> … there are a great many men and women who are so dense as to be firmly convinced that when a girl takes the white veil and dons the black cowl, she ceases to be a woman or to experience feminine longings, as though the very act of making her a nun had caused her to turn into stone. And if they should happen to hear of anything to suggest that their conviction is ill-founded, they become quite distressed, as though some enormous and diabolical evil had been perpetrated against Nature. (192)

With this introduction to the story of the supposedly dumb gardener in the monastery, as Mazzotta also observes, Filostrato objects to the church view that nature is a fixed moral order (111).

One only has to remember Aquinas' propagation of adherence to the natural order of things in his classification of the sexual acts and vices in his *Summa Theologicae* to better appreciate the target of Filostrato's criticism: "the principles of reason are those things that are according to nature, because reason presupposes things as determined by nature … in matters of action it is most grave and shameful to act against things as determined by nature" (*Summa* II-II 154 12, 1820). Aquinas continues with the necessity of acting according to one's reason especially in matters

concerning sexuality, which is "natural" for him so long as it is lived in accordance with the order of things in nature:

> A sin, in human acts, is that which is against the order of reason. Now the order of reason consists in its ordering everything to its end in a fitting manner. Wherefore it is no sin if one, by the dictate of reason, makes use of certain things in a fitting manner and order for the end to which they are adapted, provided this end be something truly good. Now just as the preservation of the bodily nature of one individual is a true good, so, too, is the preservation of the nature of the human species a very great good. And just as the use of food is directed to the preservation of life in the individual, so is the use of venereal acts directed to the preservation of the whole human race. Hence Augustine says (De Bono Conjug. xvi): "What food is to a man's well being, such is sexual intercourse to the welfare of the whole human race." Wherefore just as the use of food can be without sin, if it be taken in due manner and order, as required for the welfare of the body, so also the use of venereal acts can be without sin, provided they be performed in due manner and order, in keeping with the end of human procreation. (*Summa* II-II 153 2, 1805)

Filastato's point is that, while acknowledging that sexuality is as natural an aspect of human life as eating is, the Christian fathers believe that people can repress such a natural desire in devotion to God.

Targeting his objection not only against the church's proscription of the clergy from sexuality, Filostrato goes on to criticize others who specify rules that identify certain people as unqualified to feel the natural erotic desire found in every human, especially Andreas Capellanus, the writer of *Arts Of Loving Right*, who prescribes the right conditions, manners and reactions required for courtly love: "… there are likewise many people who are firmly convinced that digging and hoeing and coarse food and hardy living remove all lustful desires from those who work on the land, and greatly impair their intelligence and powers of perception" (192).

In addition to defining the rules in which courtly romance can be lived, Capellanus also enlists those who are not eligible to engage in such an affair. Among many others, he disqualifies peasant women and nuns from being appropriate objects

of desire in the courtly love tradition (Colish, 184). For the former, he gives the reason that their approach to love is no better than animals (185), but leaves the latter strangely unjustified, especially after he points out that clerics make the best lovers.

Following this introduction to his tale, Filastrato's characters transgress the Law of the church and courtly love via *jouissance*. As stated in Boccacio's introduction, Masetto of Lamporecchio pretends to be deaf-mute and behaves like a simpleton to make the Abbess believe that they need not worry about "his giving any cheek to these young ladies" at the monastery, and the Abbess, assuming that "he had lost his tail as well as his tongue," allows him to work as a gardener. One day, thinking that being a deaf-mute Masetto cannot give away their secret, two nuns seduce him into making love to them. They see no harm in violating one of the many other promises they have made to God and never keep, and they decide to lose their virginity. One of them says, referring to God: "He can always find other girls to preserve their virginity for Him" (196). After the first occasion, they keep visiting Masetto, until another nun discovers their secret. In time, all the nuns in the monastery "took up shares in Masetto's holding" (197) except the Abbess. Masetto had already become exhausted after "too much riding by night" when the Abbess is finally seized by the very craving that the nuns have long since succumbed to. She closets Masetto in her room for several days and, after she lets him out, continues to demand satisfaction more than the other nuns. The matters come to such a point that it becomes impossible for Masetto to cope with the demands of all the nuns. Finally he bursts out:

> I have always been given to understand, ma'am," he said "that whereas a single cock is quite sufficient for ten hens, ten men are hard put to satisfy one woman, and yet here am I with nine of them on my plate. I can't endure it any longer, not at any price, and as a matter of fact I've been on the go so

> much that I am no longer capable of delivering the goods. So you'll either have to bid me farewell or come to some sort of an arrangement (198)

This outburst marks the end of Masetto's unlimited access to *jouissance* but not its end altogether.

In the encounter with female desire, masculine sexuality cannot sustain the masculine fantasy (Wallace, 44) and has to retreat into language, the symbolic, where he can sustain his reality. As Marcus states, outside the realm of language, Masetto enjoys insatiable desire which he is nevertheless obliged to take under control in words (4). On the other hand, the monastery continues to be a site of silence, since the Abbess and the nuns agree to an arrangement that Masetto served them all justly and this be kept secret from the world outside: "And although he fathered quite a number of nunlets and monklets, it was all arranged so discreetly that nothing leaked out …" (199).

Mazotta relates the transgression of Masetto and the nuns to Boccaccio's intention to make fun of patristic discussions about sexuality. He writes:

> Boccacio seems to exploit the potential whimsicality of the casuistic debate in which the Fathers of the Church were long engaged. Discussing the morality of sexual intercourse, the fathers distinguished between the prelapsarian and postlapsarian sexuality. In the Garden of Eden – they surmised – sexuality must have been carried out without the lustful shame which accompanies the act in the fallen world. Procreation, they concluded, is the moral end which redeems sexuality as it is practiced since the fall. But Masetto's lovemaking is not directly causa prolis and his sexual aim is unencumbered by moral sophistries. Masetto acts as if he were in the Garden of Eden, and as Boccaccio alludes to the fertility of the union, he flagrantly pokes fun at – and dismisses – the pertinence of the patristic distinctions. (112-3)

The tale ends without the slightest tone of regret or repentance on the part of the characters, and least of all by Masetto, implying no moralizing attitude, something which supports Mazotta's interpretation of Boccaccio's intentions. After many years

thus spent, the Abbess dies and Masetto now getting older wants to retire on a fat pension, a request which is immediately granted:

> Thus it was that Masetto, now an elderly and prosperous father who was spared the bother of feeding his children and the expense of their upbringing, returned to the place from which he had set out with an axe on hi shoulder, having had the sense to employ his youth to good advantage. And this, he maintained, was the way that Christ treated anyone who set a pair of horns on His Crown. (199)

In addition to the subversion of the ideals of the church – the vow of celibacy, the casuistic debate about the morality of sexual intercourse – this final statement of the tale, which is put into the mouth of the main protagonist, that suggests Masetto thereby cuckolded Christ, is quite scandalous considering the power of the church in the fourteenth century when *Decameron* was written.

As Filastrato's introduction implied, the tale not only subverts Christian ideals, but also undermines the courtly love tradition as prescribed by Andreas Capellanus. Masetto, a poor peasant, belongs to the class of people Capellanus disqualified from the experience of courtly love due to their engagement in sex in manner of animals. As mentioned above, nuns were also considered as inappropriate partners in courtly love relationships. Moreover, the readiness of the nuns to grant Masetto what he wishes is against the decorum Capellanus suggests to be appropriate (Mazzotta, 114). Hence, by narrating a tale which entails a web of relationships aimed at the satisfaction of erotic desire, Boccaccio undermines the power of the two significant discourses of erotic desire of his time.

Some critics argue that the return to the use of language, both by Alatiel and Masetto, indicates the elimination of the social threat posed by such unleashed desire. Marcus claims that Masetto regains control of his life in language and Alatiel, in a sense, "rewrites" her virginity and then, by getting married, neutralizes the

sexual threat to society which was so devastating in her adventures (11). However, it is difficult to find any indication of devastation on the part of Alatiel throughout the tale, other than at the moments she loses the object of her desire, her lover, to whom she had become accustomed. Even then, her grief is easily overcome with the replacement of the former lover with a new one, giving way to more *jouissance* rather than devastation.

As in Masetto's case, the period of silence characterized by unlimited satisfaction of erotic desire remains within the realm of silence, at the per-symbolic stage as Alatiel and her accomplice decide to keep it a secret. Hence, neither during the time she is with her lovers (whose language she cannot speak), nor when she returns to her country and language, is society implied to be under threat. Likewise, in the tale about Masetto society remains unaware of what goes on in the monastery until the very end. The silence, which constitutes the site of the transgressive act and later surrounds it to conceal it from society, guarantees its maintenance and subversive potential.

Following a similar line of thinking to Marcus, Victoria Kirkham, referring to Aristotle and Aquinas' writings and their association of eloquent speech with intellectual and mental progress, argues that in *Decameron* "failure to communicate articulately often accompanies beastly animal-like behavior," and she gives Alatiel and Masetto, as well as Cimone as examples ("Word", 137-138). She argues that,

> [p]roper speech mirrors the well ordered soul, makes possible a harmonious social life; its failure accompanies morally defective behavior and works against the interests of the political community in which all men, like Boccaccio's emblematic frame narrators, must rationally participate to achieve their ontological perfection. (128)

Although the references to Aristotle and Aquinas may have validity in the sense that Boccaccio might be alluding to their association of language with intellectual and

mental progress, it seems to serve the purpose of questioning rather than affirming their thinking. A close reading, without imposing one's moralizing attitude or preconceptions about what would be a more appropriate attitude, reveals that there is little reason to argue for the opposite.

Along with Alatiel and Masetto, Kirkham mentions Cimone, the protagonist of tale V/1, in support of her argument. Cimone is a boy who shows no interest in culture, learning, refined manners and the opposite sex, despite coming form a wealthy family. He chooses to be a shepherd until he meets a very beautiful girl for whose sake he decides to educate himself. Although it is true that Cimone was somewhat beastly before he fell in love and decided to educate himself, Boccaccio's narration does not imply any beastliness in the cases of Alatiel or Masetto unless one considers excessive pleasure beastliness. He rather emphasizes the immense pleasure they derive from the experience. Moreover, it is falling in love and showing erotic interest in women that saves Cimone from beastliness. Hence, it would be more apt to read Boccaccio's consignment of excessive pleasure to the silent realm as an indication of his opposition to the philosophies of Aristotle and Aquinas, philosophies which are based on temperance and refinement of character.

Kirkham continues her argument by stating that the excellence of the protagonists and the narrators of the framework in their use of language denotes their morally higher status, whereas suppression or abuse of language denotes moral deficiency. In Lacanian terms, however, mastery in using language is only a sign of total immersion into the symbolic and total submission to the Name of the Father, whereas retreat from language brings one closer to the imaginary, the Real and hence the state of wholeness. Kirkham's conclusion to her article, which she intends to be

read as a positive attribute, is actually a manifestation of how the narrators' mastery of language is in fact indicative of their submission to the Law:

> Finally, the narrators' linguistic decorum is itself politically and morally emblematic. Prompted by reason, they have fled for their lives from a diseased, infernal city of anarchy to reconstitute the community through hierarchically ordered, harmonious daily living, a retreat shaped by virtuous words and deeds in ideal ethical consonance ("Word", 145-6)

It is not easy to understand how a model of a society based on hierarchy, especially a monarchical order, as is the case with the *brigata*, can be perceived as ideal, more so after the narration of so many stories that openly transgress Law as "virtuous words". One can arrive at this conclusion only with a total disregard of Boccaccio's double talk. As will be discussed in further detail below, Boccaccio's intention in making the members of the *brigata* narrate such tales can hardly be interpreted as a moralizing one. One only needs to remember the reactions of the *brigata* to the many stories that end with the uniting of the lovers, however illicit the relationship may be, with a prayer to be granted a similar satisfaction in love.

That Boccaccio's stance is far from being an ethical one in the religious sense of the word is evident from the above mentioned two tales. In addition to constituting silence as the site of erotic desire, another important aspect that comes to the foreground is the emphasis on repetition; repetition of the sexual act that leads to *jouissance* and thereby excess. At the end of the story of Alatiel it is stated that she had made love to men "on thousands of occasions"; Masetto is exhausted trying to satisfy the nine nuns and exclaims, "I can't endure it any longer" (198). In other tales, too, Boccaccio very often stresses that the lovers enjoy each other's "favors" many times when they have the time and opportunity. It is as if it is not sufficient simply to fulfill the act, but the Law has to be transgressed repeatedly, violating the

teachings of temperance and moderation. So long as the Law continues its force, *jouissance* remains the means of transgression.

The thematic of excess is reiterated at the structural level as the narrative of *Decameron* is based on repetition: The members of the *brigata* narrate tales on a theme selected for the day, which means that a theme is repeated at least nine times with each narrator – Dioneo enjoys the freedom of telling whatever pleases him. Although the theme changes every day, certain motifs and patterns are reiterated over and over again, rendering the text both structurally and content-wise excessive. The most significant repetitions in *Decameron* are the acts of fornication and adultery, both acts included in the list of mortal sins compiled by the church fathers. Of the hundred tales in *Decameron*, forty-three convey at least one instance of either fornication or adultery. Through these acts, two important vows taken in front of the church's authority are continually violated: the matrimonial vows, and the vows of celibacy. Not only the Christian theology but also the dominant patriarchal system of the society is thereby challenged. As Jane Gallop observes, infidelity is in a sense a practice of undermining the Name-of-the-Father (48). Hence, through adultery and fornication, women in *Decameron* undermine the power of their husbands, fathers, brothers and even lovers over them.

One of the recurrent themes of *Decameron* is the inability of the clergy to refrain from their carnal desires. As soon as the Canon Law began to be established, resistance of bodily desires was asserted as the norm. However, in the tales of *Decameron*, members of the clergy seem unable to resist their sexual attraction for the opposite sex, and they even abuse certain religious practices for their ends, justifying themselves by resorting to crooked reasoning or finding practical solutions in order to be able to submit to their desires. They also act as accomplices to

adulterers when it is to their benefit. The fourth tale of Day I provides a good example to the hypocrisy of the clergy.

This tale is about an abbot who discovers that a monk in the monastery takes a girl secretly to his room to sleep with her. When the monk understands that the abbot has discovered his secret and will scold him, and perhaps even punish him, he leaves the girl alone in the room as a challenge for the abbot. The moment the abbot realizes that he girl is alone in the room and the monk will not be back for a while, he has sex with the girl. He does not even really fight against his desire much, and finds justifications for using the opportunity to satisfy his carnal desires: "Why not enjoy myself a little, when I have the opportunity? After all, I can have my fill of sorrow and afflictions whenever I like. … It's always a good idea, in my opinion, to accept any gift that the Good Lord places in our path." (47) Thus, the common practice of mortifying the flesh among monks is misinterpreted as a justification of committing a sin. Having committed the same sin, the abbot still does not give up his intention of scolding the monk for violating the rules of the monastery. However, when the monk confronts him with the fact that he himself is guilty of the same sin, instead of being ashamed and penitent, they become each other's confidantes. The tale ends with the assumption that they repeat the sin again when the opportunity arises. The narrator concludes that "we can only assume that they afterwards brought her back at regular intervals" (48). Thus, the problem is resolved only in the sense that their shameful act is not revealed, but the "sinful" practice is, if not definitely, at least implied to be, continued.

A similar event is narrated in the second tale of Day IX, the introduction to which sums up the whole story: "An abbess rises hurriedly from her bed in the dark when it is reported to her that one of the nuns is abed with a lover. But being with a

priest at the time, the Abbess claps his breeches on her head, mistaking them for her veil. On pointing this out to the Abbess, the accused nun is set at liberty, and thenceforth she is able to forgather with her lover at her leisure." (655) As in the tale of the monk and abbot, the abbess rushes out of her room with the intention of punishing the nun. Following the discourse of the Christian teaching, she calls the nun "damnable sinner". However, when she is revealed to be guilty of the same sin, her language changes from scolding, abuses and threats to "a completely different line, arguing that it was impossible to defend oneself against the goadings of the flesh" (657). She tells the nuns that "provided the thing was discreetly arranged, as it had been in the past, they were all at liberty to enjoy themselves whenever they pleased" (658).

Interestingly, the tale does not stop at the point where the church's dictum of celibacy is allowed to be freely transgressed by the nuns. The final sentence reads: "She thenceforth arranged for him to visit her at frequent intervals, undeterred by the envy of those of her fellow nuns, without lovers, who consoled themselves in secret as best they could" (658). This statement insinuates that those nuns who could not find a lover for themselves resorted to masturbation, as it is impossible to resist "the goadings of the flesh". Among many other sexual practices, is considered a sign of indulgence in sexual desire and a sexual act that does not aim at procreation and is therefore "unnatural". By implying that even nuns cannot resist fleshly cravings and so masturbate, the tale also adds another transgression against the proscription of masturbation.

Actually *Decameron* entails a list of almost every type of sexual engagement that was defined as against natural order. In his *Summa Theologicae*, St. Aquinas gives a clear description of "unnatural vices":

> …wherever there occurs a special kind of deformity whereby the venereal act is rendered unbecoming, there is a determinate species of lust. This may occur in two ways: First, through being contrary to right reason, and this is common to all lustful vices; secondly, because, in addition, it is contrary to the natural order of the venereal act as becoming to the human race: and this is called "the unnatural vice." This may happen in several ways. First, by procuring pollution, without any copulation, for the sake of venereal pleasure: this pertains to the sin of "uncleanness" which some call "effeminacy." Secondly, by copulation with a thing of undue species, and this is called "bestiality." Thirdly, by copulation with an undue sex, male with male, or female with female, as the Apostle states (Rm. 1:27): and this is called the "vice of sodomy." Fourthly, by not observing the natural manner of copulation, either as to undue means, or as to other monstrous and bestial manners of copulation. (*Summa* II-II 154 11, 1819)

Thus, St. Aquinas proscribes masturbation, homosexuality and different sexual positions all of which (and others not listed by him) find their way into *Decameron* and are narrated without any moralizing attitude by the narrators.

The tenth tale of Day V, for example, is about a man, Pietro, who "punishes" his wife for sleeping with a young man by sharing the man's favors with her. Although the narrator of the tale pretends not to explicitly state that a homosexual relationship took place, he, nevertheless, makes sure that his meaning is not missed:

> How exactly Pietro arranged matters, after supper, to the mutual satisfaction of all three parties, I no longer remember. But I do know that the young man was found next morning wandering about the piazza, not exactly certain with which of the pair he had spent the greater part of the night, the wife or the husband. (440)

In the tale, Pietro's discovery of his wife's adultery takes place right at the moment he tells his wife about the fight that has taken place between a neighbour couple when the man found out about his wife's lover. Hence, there are two instances of adultery narrated in one story, but, interestingly enough, the one which involves an "unnatural vice", as Wallace suggests, proves to be better able to preserve the

internal equilibrium by instituting a "new domestic order" than that in the other house (67).

The authority of both the church and the husband are undermined in two tales which entail sexual acts other than the one prescribed by the church. In tale IX/3, a naïve man is made to believe that he is pregnant, and he blames his wife, who had insisted on "lying on top," for the misfortune (661). In tale VII/2 on the other hand, Peronella, a cunning woman who takes her lover into the house as soon as her husband leaves, makes up the story when her husband comes back home unexpectedly that the man is there in the house to buy a tub. As the husband goes into the tub to scrape its inside, Peronella leans over the mouth of the tub and her lover approaching her from behind "in the manner of a wild and hot-blooded stallion mounting on Parthian mare in the open fields, … satisfied his young man's passion" (494). Thus, they consummate their love right under the nose of the husband. A similar instance of love-making as the husband looks on takes place in VII/9, where the wife makes the husband believe that the spell cast on the tree the husband is looking down from makes the person see things that are not actually happening. In all these tales, with the inappropriate way the lovers engage in sexuality, especially the women undermine both the church's and the husband's authorities through *jouissance*.

There are further transgressions in tales VIII/8 and X/4; in the former, after a controversy, two couples resolve the problem of adultery amongst themselves by exchanging their partners freely, and in the latter, a man's infatuation with a married woman comes close to necrophilia as he exhumes her body on the night she is buried just to be able to caress her once. However, he realizes that the woman is not really dead and looks after her until she recovers from the illness that had given the

appearance of death, and returns her to her husband. Everyone is so happy and grateful that no one questions the man about his motives in unburying a recently dead body. Far from being punished, he is respected for the noble deed of bringing a husband and wife together.

In addition to detailing the various unnatural practices outlined by Augustine and other church fathers, Decameron also disrupts of the church's teaching through tales of religious men who use religious means for the satisfaction of their desires. In the fourth tale of Day 3, Dom Felice, a respectable monk, while pretending to teach Friar Puccio, a devout Christian who neglects his wife for his religious pursuits, how to attain blessedness by carrying out a certain penance, creates an opportunity to have "a high old time with the penitent's wife". He tells Friar Puccio that to achieve saintliness, he has to confess all his sins, start to fast, practice rigorous abstinence for forty day, go up to the roof at night and stare at the heavens in a position as if he is being crucified till matins, and meanwhile saying three hundred paternosters and three hundred Hail Marys. This will be followed by a brief sleep, then going to church, attending mass, and saying prayers again. Friar Puccio finds this a small price to be paid for saintliness and starts to fulfill the requirements of this fake penance. During the time Friar Puccio stands motionless on the roof, staring at the heavens, Dom Felice enjoys the company of Friar Puccio's wife, a woman who has a different interpretation of the path to paradise. As she says to Dom Felice, "[y]ou make Friar Puccio do penance, but we are the ones who go to Paradise" (221). She is so happy to have attained what had been denied to her for so long that she finds a way to continue meeting Dom Felice after her husband's forty day penance ends. The narrator of the tale, Panfilo, seems to be of the same opinion, and he introduces the tale with the following words: … many are those who, whilst

they are busy making strenuous efforts to get to Paradise, unwittingly send some other person there in their stead" (216). He concludes that it has been the case with Dom Felice and Friar Puccio's wife. Thus, the story ends without any moralizing remarks, and is narrated without a critical distance.

There are many instances of clergymen who use religious excuses to create an opportunity to enjoy the satisfaction of erotic desires. In the eighth tale of Day 3, an abbot makes a man, Ferondo, consume a special powder and believe that he is dead, buried and taken to Purgatory. During the time he stays in the enclosed place which he takes to be Purgatory, the abbot sleeps with his wife. The abbot finally "resurrects" him and makes him raise the child he begot on his wife. The abbot not only uses the religious feelings of a man to be with his wife, but he deceives the woman by twisting the Christian philosophy about the body and soul dichotomy, as well as saintliness. When the abbot confesses to the wife his love for her, the woman is astonished. She says: "I always took you for a saint. Is this the sort of request a saintly man should be making to a lady who goes to him for advice?" The abbot's response is interesting:

> No loss of saintliness is involved, for saintliness resides in the soul, and what I am asking of you is merely a sin of the body … when you consider that your beauty is admired by a saint, you have more reason to be proud of it than other women, because saints are accustomed to seeing the beauties of Heaven. Furthermore, even though I am an Abbot, I am a man like the others, and as you can see I am still young (257).

The final statement once again draws attention to the naturalness of carnal desires in humans, even in the clergy.

In tales IX/10, IV/2 and VII/3, too, clergymen use religion to deceive people into succumbing to their sexual demands. In IX/10, Father Gianni, making a poor peasant man and his wife believe that he can turn the wife into a mule temporarily by

magic attempts to engage in sexual intercourse right in front of the eyes of her husband. In IV/2, Friar Alberto makes a vain woman believe that Angel Gabriel is in love with her and makes love to her claiming that this is the shape the Angel takes in human form. In VII/3, Friar Rinaldo sleeps with the mother of his godchildren, and makes the husband that he was there in the house to help her save the child from the terrible disease that was about to kill the baby.

For a Medieval audience, the most profane of all the stories about the clergy who use religious excuses to satisfy their sexual longings is the tenth novelle of day 3 told by Dioneo, the anarchist of the *brigata*. This tale was excluded from editions of *Decameron*, or abridged, for 400 years (Kirkham "Love", 8) and did not appear in English entire and intact until 1930 (Wallace, 46). The innocent introduction by Boccaccio does not in the least warn the reader about what is to follow: "Alibech becomes a recluse, and after being taught by the monk, Rustico, to put the devil back in Hell, she is eventually taken away to become the wife of Neerbal." Alibech is a fourteen-year-old girl from a rich family who, being influenced by the Christians in town, inquires about the best and easiest way of serving God, and is told that this can best be learned from the people who had gone to live in the remoter parts of the Sahara. A naïve young girl, Alibech secretly leaves her family for the Sahara and begins to ask every holy man living a life of a recluse in the desert how best to serve God. Each recluse directs her to the next one to avoid the risk of temptation Alibech represents for them.

The final hermit Alibech consults, Rustico, initially tries to control his sexual desires, but finally gives in to temptation and deceives her by telling her that the best way to serve God was by putting the devil back to Hell. He undresses and asks Alibech to follow his example. Boccaccio defines Rustico's physical reaction to

seeing the beauty of the girl in words which have obvious and profane religious connotations: “the resurrection of the flesh” (276). Sexually innocent, Alibech does not recognize the male sexual organ and Rustico makes her believe that it is the devil and she possesses the hell where the devil is supposed to be sent back to, adding that this is the kind of service Gods like most. Alibech is so pleased with the way they serve God that she exclaims:

> I can certainly see what those worthy men in Gafsa meant when they said that serving God was so agreeable. I don’t honestly recall having done anything that gave me so much pleasure and satisfaction as I get from putting the devil back in Hell. To my way of thinking, anyone who devotes his energies to anything but the service of God is a complete blockhead (277)

What Rustico cannot foresee, however, is that, being intent on serving God and enjoying the means, Alibech wants to repeat the “ritual” more often than Rustico can physically manage. She argues that, having helped him “subdue the pride of his devil,” Rustico can at least “get [his] devil to help [her] tame the fury of [her] hell” (278). Living on a diet of herb-roots, Rustico is far from being able to meet Alibech’s demands: “It was rather like chucking a bean into the mouth of a lion” (278). Boccaccio describes the situation by stating that there was “a surplus of desire on the one hand and a shortage of power on the other” (278). Rustico is saved from exhaustion with the arrival of Neerbal, a legacy hunter, who takes Alibech back to Gafsa and marries her to share the fortune she inherited after her family has died in a fire. Dioneo, the narrator of the tale, ends his tale with advice to the ladies of the *brigata*: “And so, young ladies, if you stand in need of God’s grace, see that you learn to put the devil back in Hell, for it is greatly to His liking and pleasurable to the parties concerned, and a great deal of good can arise and flow in the process” (279).

The tale of Alibech, the final tale of Day III, is perhaps the best example in *Decameron* of Boccaccio's characteristic doubletalk and his subversion of religious ideals. He chose a recluse who has gone to the desert to rid himself of his fleshly cravings and live a life of self-denial to be tempted to enjoy uninhibited *jouissance*. Moreover, this hermit deceives a devoted naïve girl by using religion, and even makes her believe that this is the best way to serve God. Mazzotta observes that "[i]n he Christian exegesis, the process by which the Christian viator moves from the realm of fleshly delights to the pleasures of the Heavenly Jerusalem is figured through the palm leaves. In the novella, by a pointed reversal, the palm leaves are the bed on which Rustico moves from prayer to carnal desires" (118). On the other hand, Kirkham believes that "from the artist's point of view, Dioneo's tale as well as other tales told during Queen Neifile's reign[32] are no less inappropriate to the general plan of the work than those illustrating the kind of virtuous love epitomized by patient Griselda" (1981, 86). By this she means that, in narrating such tales, Boccaccio intends to point out the misconduct that readers are likely to come across in life and thus warn them against such occasions.

However, Boccaccio's personal defense in the prologue, in the introduction to day IV, right after Alibech's story, and in the epilogue neither supports such an interpretation, nor confirms the church's attitude to love. Dioneo's introductory remark is no less inviting to *jouissance* than his above mentioned conclusion: "By learning how [the devil is put back to Hell], there may yet be time perhaps for you to save our souls from perdition" (274). Moreover, following the tale, Neifile, the queen of the day, responds to Filostrato's provoking remark that, given the chance, they could "have taught the sheep by now to put the devil back in Hell, no less skillfully

[32] The subject of the tales chosen by the *brigata* for the third day is "the people who by dint of their own efforts have achieved an object they greatly desire, or recovered a thing previously lost" (189).

than Rustico taught Alibech," by saying that "if you men had tried to teach them anything of the sort you might have learned some sense from us, as Masetto did from the nuns, and retrieved the use of your tongues when your bones were rattling from exhaustion" (280).

Obviously, neither Boccaccio nor any member of the *brigata* nor the tale seem to have moralizing intentions. It is impossible not to agree with Wallace, who says that if there is anything that has dubious moral standing in the tale, it is the fact that no one thinks of looking for Alibech before the fire at Gafsa and the man who decides to find and bring her back is a man called Neerbal solely interested in acquiring the wealth she inherits after her father and siblings die (46).

In addition to its subversive intent, the tale is significant in its depiction of sexually insatiable women that is a recurrent figure in many other tales in *Decameron*. The image of woman as an evil temptress is a Christian cliché, and her insatiability is a negative attribute in the Middle Ages. In the idealist patriarchal discourses, Woman has come to be associated with the body as opposed to the soul for centuries. However, the association of woman with the bodily need not be interpreted as degrading since such an attitude would be emulating the same discourse, and accepting its premise of hierarchical oppositions in which the woman is aligned with the "lesser" component of the binaries. Rather than reversing the formula of body and mind dichotomy and maintaining the hierarchy therein, it is possible to disrupt the dominant discourse by rendering the hierarchical mechanism it rests upon ineffective.

This is a strategy Luce Irigaray employs to render phallogocentric categories obsolete. She considers female sexuality to belong to another system of

thinking and celebrates female insatiability as a positive attribute although it is a source of anxiety for men:

> Thus [women] desire at the same time nothing and everything. It is always more and other than this one---of sex, for example---that you give them, that you attribute to them and which is often interpreted, and feared, as a sort of insatiable hunger, a voracity which will engulf you entirely. While in fact it is really a question of another economy which diverts the linearity of a project, undermines the target-object of a desire, explodes the polarization of desire on only one pleasure, and disconcerts fidelity to only one discourse (*This Sex*, 103-104)

Although it is impossible to argue that Boccaccio had a sensibility about female sexuality like Irigaray's, it is interesting to note how he refuses to depict female desire in subordination to the Christian discourse, and how he justifies women's pursuit of their desire at the expense of the violation of the social rules. In the above mentioned tales about clergymen who deceive husbands by using their piety in order to be able sleep with their wives (tales III/4 and III/8), women are justified on the grounds that their husbands neglected them because of their devotion to religion. The last tale of Day II is the most noteworthy in this respect.

In the introduction to the tale, Dioneo states that he will tell a story about "foolishness of those who, overestimating their natural powers, resort to specious reasoning to persuade themselves that they can do the impossible, and who attempt to mold people in their own image, thus flying in the face of nature" (179). What follows is the story of Messer Ricciardo, a wealthy judge, who marries the prettiest and most charming girl in Pisa, Bartolomea. He is described as a man with "more brain than brawn," and who thought "he could satisfy a wife with those same talents that he brought to his studies" (179). However, he hardly manages to consummate their marriage on their wedding night and keeps postponing making love to Bartolomea by showing her a calendar in which there is "not a single day that …

man and woman should not abstain from sexual union" (179). On a fine summer day, Messer Ricciardo takes her fishing, but their boat drifts far from the shore where a pirate, Paganino, kidnaps Ricciardo. Although Bartolomea weeps bitterly, Paganino manages to console her as "he was not the sort of man to pay any heed to calendars" and before long "the judge and his *laws* faded from the lady's memory, and life with Paganino was a positive joy" (emphasis added, 181). Meanwhile, Messer Ricciardo finds out where his wife is and makes friends with Paganino to persuade him to return Bartolomea to him. Paganino agrees on condition that he receives Bartolomea's consent first. However, Bartolomea pretends not to recognize him at first and, when they are alone, she confesses that she knew who he is but is not willing to go back with him. When Messer Ricciardo appeals to her sense of honor, she replies "I mean to defend what remains of it as jealously as anyone. I only wish my parents had displayed an equal regard for it when they handed me over to you! But since you were so unconcerned about my honor then, I do not intend to worry about their honor now" (184).

This statement ties in with Dioneo's introduction to the story where, as Hastings states, he tells that such treatment of one's wife, being a defiance of the laws of nature, was foolishness and equal to dishonor. If Messer Ricciardo and Bartolomea's parents had not been so selfish in concerning themselves with their own benefits alone, disregarding the demands of nature on a young woman, events would not have turned out this way. She ends her words punning on the concept of mortal sin that her husband too often resorted to: " … And if I am living in mortar sin, it can be pestle sin too for all I care" (184). Messer Ricciardo goes mad with grief, and, whenever people ask him anything, the only response they get is: "There is never any rest for the bar" (185). McWilliam mentions that the literal Italian

translation of the statement would be “The wicked hole refuses to take a holiday”, where the word meaning “hole” also means bar. The English maintains the sexual connotation by using the word bar, a legal term, which is also a word with sexual connotations (819). Hence, in this story again, not only the judge’s laws at home, but the parents’ and the society’s laws are violated for the sake of *jouissance* that accepts no limitations.

For Boccaccio excessive sexual desire is not something unnatural and despicable; on the contrary, it is a natural drive that needs to be satisfied. Indeed, the only form of sexuality that is abhorred in the *Decameron* is the one lived in return for material gains. These instances never end with positive outcomes and the deriding tone is obvious. Three tales from Day VIII, the first, second and the last one, are cases in point. In VIII/1, a married woman agrees to sleep with the man who is in love with her in return for money. However, the man’s love for her turns into disgust when he hears her proposal and cunningly, he both sleeps with the woman and finds a way to give the money to her husband. He thereby both keeps his promise and prevents the woman have access to the money herself. Tale VIII/2 is also about a woman who succumbs to a clergyman’s sexual advances for money. Pretending that he has no money with him, the man leaves his cloak with the woman until he brings the money. As in the previous tale, the clergyman both sleeps with the woman and finds a clever way of getting back his cloak without having to pay any money. In the longer tale of VIII/10, a Sicilian woman begins to have an affair with a young man thinking that he is rich. The man finally understands that she has been with him for the money she thinks he has. With a cunning plan he robs all her money and abandons her. These tales are among the few that do not end with enjoyment of *jouissance* and unification of the lovers in *Decameron*. Because the illicit love affairs

in these tales are not based on natural need and desire but desire for money, Boccaccio does not allow a happy ending for these women.

Other than these tales were the central concern is money more than desire, in *Decameron* lovers from different social and economic backgrounds never reach a happy ending. Interestingly enough, Boccaccio, who has been quite verbose and adamant in challenging the dominant Christian theology of the time that determined the discourse of desire in the Middle Ages, cannot confront the dominant social and political discourse which envisions a society with rigid stratification based on nobility and wealth. While devotion to God or fidelity to the vow of matrimony cannot proscribe lovers from uniting their bodies in passion, Boccaccio's tales allow only those lovers whose social or economic classes are equivalent join in love or marriage. For instance in most tales of Day V, on which tales about lovers who unite in love after enduring many hardships are narrated, the proscription before the lovers' being allowed to get married is overcome when it is revealed that they are actually of noble descent and therefore appropriate for each other. On the other hand, among tales of Day IV which are about stories with unhappy endings, tale IV/1 and tale IV/5 recount the stories of lovers who are not allowed to marry only because of class difference. In tale IV/1 king Tancredi has his daughter's servant lover killed but repents only after his daughter commits suicide out of her grief. In IV/5 a young girl's brothers, who belong to the rich middle class, murder her lover who is poor and inappropriate for their sister in their opinion. They bury corpse where no one can find it. However, the girl finds the body and puts its head into a flower pot. She sits by the flower pot every day and cries herself to death.

In *Decameron*, Boccacio portrays a very worldly world. As the nineteenth century Italian critic stated "there are no transcendent values or ideal significations in

Decameron which conveys an affirmation of a world bounded by time and place, a world as experienced by men" (qtd in Mazzotta, 5). Love, adulterous or otherwise, is neither theologized nor idealized but neutralized (Colish, 219). Erotic desire, which had been tried to be repressed and even excluded from life, is narrated as an integral part of human reality. With the structural excess and multiplication of sexual acts, as well as inclusion of almost every "unnatural" sexual experience the Christian theology is subverted, and *agape*, which in a sense provides the believer with the chance to partake the perfection of God is replaced with the natural love for the human body. Hence, through *jouissance* Boccaccio manages to secularize erotic desire which was christianized in the form of *agape* in Medieval theology.

CHAPTER V

DESIRE RATIONALIZED / DESIRE EROTICIZED: READING CLELAND'S *FANNY HILL* AGAINST MODERN PHILOSOPHY FROM DESCARTES TO KANT

Man's reason had already been identified as "the most genuine self" superior to other parts of the self and the body in antiquity with Plato's conception of the tripartite soul. However, starting with Descartes' radical separation of the mind and soul[33] from the body the breach opened up between body and soul reached its widest dimension in the seventeenth century, known as The Age of Reason. The identification of the thinking ability as the distinctive feature of being human led to what Solomon calls "the apotheosis of the self", that is, the constitution of the self as the sublime ideal beginning with this period. Therefore, Lacan refers to the seventeenth century as the "inaugural moment of the emergence of the subject" (*Fundamentals*, 223). This radical separation of body and soul in the constitution of the modern subject by Descartes gave a new impetus to the composition of hierarchical binaries, in which the term associated with the ideal in the binary is deemed to be superior to the other; in this case, mind over the body, reason over passions[34].

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[33] For Descartes "soul and mind are interchangeable" … "mind is not part of the soul but the soul in its entirety" (Voss, 175).

[34] The term "passion" abundant in the titles of a lot of works written in the seventeenth century onwards has other connotations than our modern conception of the word with sexual undertones. Passions commonly refer to emotions rather than specifically erotic desire (Schmitter, Amy M. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://www.science.uva.nl/~seop/entries/emotions-17th18th/)

Descartes' philosophical thinking relies on what he called methodological doubt: a system of though that is initiated with doubting every given in order to arrive at the indubitable absolute through introspection. His emphases on experience, introspective reflection, the nature of the self and the importance of first-person standpoint represent a turning point in Western thought for which he is commonly referred to as the "the father of modern philosophy" (Solomon, 5). Hence, Descartes may be seen as the starting point after which the object of scrutiny and the sublime ideal of philosophical discourse, which had been the *idea*s in antiquity and God in Middle Ages, became the self with the Age of Reason. The overvaluation of the self as a rational being with total disregard for desire and anything bodily was to continue in the following two and a half centuries and reach its culmination with Hegel in mid-nineteenth century.

In *Principles of Philosophy*, Descartes argues that body and soul are completely distinct from each other; body is *extended*, that is it is material and unthinking, whereas the soul is *unextended*, that is it is immaterial and thinking and it is its thinking ability that makes the *unextended* superior to the *extended*. For Plato, conceived as imprisoned in the body, and for Aquinas, conceived as being partially dependent on the body, the soul was in one way or the other involved with the body. However, for Descartes, body and soul by no means involve each other; they simply remain intimately linked until the death of the body (Michael, 186). He conceived the body, like the entire visible universe, to be like an automaton, a perfectly functioning mechanism, and the mind, being independent of the body, absolute and eternal. The body has significance only in that through the emotions it provides certain impetus to compel the mind to think certain things (Rorty, 386). Thus, reducing the relation of the mind to the body to a mere "close and intimate relation" (*Principles* I 48), in

which the two maintain their distinct existence, Descartes concluded with the separation of mind from the body.

The radical split between the body and the mind underlies Descartes' delineation of happiness. He defines happiness as the "perfect contentment of mind and inner satisfaction ... acquired by the wise without fortune's favor" (Descartes, *Writings*, 257) and the pleasure gained from contemplating the truth to be "practically the only happiness in this life" which is complete and exempt from pain (Descartes, *Writings*, 10). He proclaims that although truth may not help one avoid pain and suffering altogether, provided that we know how to use our reason, true philosophy enables us to be content "amidst the saddest disasters and most bitter pains" (Descartes, *Writings*, 272). Like Aristotle, Descartes associates supreme good with virtue which is, for him, "a firm and constant will to bring about everything we judge to be the best and to employ all the force of our intellect in judging well" (Descartes, *Writings*, 262). He distinguishes "the greatest souls" from the "common souls" on the grounds that while the latter "abandon themselves to their passions and are happy or unhappy only according as the things that happen to them are agreeable or unpleasant", the former "reason in a way that is so strong and cogent that, although they also have passions, and indeed passions which are often more violent than those of ordinary people, their reason nevertheless always remains mistress, and even makes their afflictions serve them and contribute to the perfect happiness they enjoy in this life" (qtd. in Rutherford, plato.stanford.edu). He identifies "the true function of reason" to be "to examine and consider without passion the value of all the perfections, both of the body and of the soul, which can be acquired by our conduct, so that... we shall always choose the better" (Descartes, *Writings*, 265).

Hence, making one's passions[35] subservient to one's reason is constituted as a virtue and the means to lead a better life.

The impact of Descartes' philosophy on his younger contemporaries is immediately observable in the Spinoza's philosophy. Like Descartes, Spinoza conceives of the universe as a system of perfection and examines human passions within the universe in relation to concepts like causality, necessity and coincidence. Spinoza's ethics relies on his conception of Nature as a system based on necessity with utmost perfection: "In Nature there is nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way" (*Ethics* 1p29, 20). Following this conception of nature where nothing happens coincidentally, Spinoza conceives reason to be working independently of any contingency and as having a universal absolute quality: "It is in the nature of reason to perceive things under a certain aspect of eternity" (*Ethics* 2p44c2, 60). While attributing reason an "aspect of eternity", he rules out sense perception as inadequate means to reach the absolute truth.

One key concept on which Spinoza's ethics and hence concept of virtue relies is c*onatus*, that is the constant strife of the thing "to preserve in its being" (*Ethics* 3p6, 75) which is "the actual essence of the thing itself" (*Ethics* 3p7, 75). He writes: "Since reason demands nothing contrary to Nature, it demands that everyone love himself, seek his own advantage, what is really useful to him, want what will really lead man to a greater perfection, and absolutely, that everyone should strive to preserve his own being as far as he can" (*Ethics* 4p18s, 125). Thus, *conatus* is a direct consequence of the natural inclination of a being to preserve itself in a perfect

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[35] For Descartes, passions depend on some movement of the animal spirits in the body and are different form what he calls "internal emotions of the soul" which can resist the most violent assaults of the passions.

state. For Spinoza, virtue is the capacity to act under the dictate of *conatus*, which is also equivalent to acting according to reason. Matthews explains that "[a]lthough self-preservation first appears in the *Ethics* as a tendency toward continued temporal duration, we have seen that the achievement of adequate understanding – which is the highest virtue – brings a participation in the eternal that is itself a kind of preservation in one's being" (297). Therefore, *conatus* implies an orientation to partake the immortal, the absolute. Nevertheless, Spinoza also conceives desire in general to be related to *conatus*, as it involves body and mind together with a consciousness of it (*Ethics* 3p9s, 76), especially as it is directed toward particular objects (Matthews, 271). In this sense desire is the means of orientation towards the external objects of the world. Spinoza proclaims that the good and the evil may change depending on the individual's perception of it (*Ethics* 3p9s, 76). However, this relativity in the evaluation of good and evil is a consequence of man's being subject to external forces and his inability to appreciate the true implications of a situation, which happens because man is a finite part of nature. These external forces may induce passions which can lead man to act even against his own benefits despite his reason. Therefore, the orientation toward the external objects of the world should not be subordinate to passions – "Insofar as men are subject to passions, they cannot be said to agree in nature" (*Ethics* 4p32, 130) –, especially to the three ethical hindrances of overvaluing - wealth, fame and sensual pleasure (Matthews, 269).

Hence, the two important philosophers of the Age of Reason, Descartes and Spinoza replaced *eros* and *agape* with reason as the means to achieve the highest ideal, the knowledge of the self and thereby the universe, an aspect of the absolute and the eternal. They, thus, maintained the centuries-old tendency of debasing passions as hindrance before reaching the eternal ideal.

If Descartes and after him Spinoza are among the most important philosophers to set the mood of the Age of Reason on the continent, it is John Locke (1632-1704) who put his stamp on Britain. Locke both agreed and partook and defied certain aspects of the seventeenth century philosophers of the continent: He rejected Descartes' argument that one possesses innate ideas at birth but argued that every mind is a blank slate, *tabula rasa*, on which ideas are inscribed by sensation or reflection in life. Therefore, he argues in Book I of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, there is no truth to which all people attest. However, this by no means implies that Locke believed in the relativity of reality. On the contrary, he assumed that one's reason would inevitably deduce the same conclusions from the sense experience and attain knowledge that is universally valid. Locke's giving priority to sensations, on the other hand, did not result in a consequential valuing of the body. He writes "the body too goes to the making the man" (*Essay*, 306), which indicates an obligatory acceptance of what is undeniable. The self, for Locke then, is a self-reflective consciousness with a body attached to it.

Perhaps one of the most radical thinkers of the seventeenth century, an older contemporary of Locke, is Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who is better known for his political philosophy. He was a materialist who, in his *Leviathan*, argued that whatever is not corporeal does not exist. He rejected Cartesian dualism, the immortality of the soul and conceived freedom as being free to do what one desires. He identified a primary psychological egotism in every human which was oriented for one's own benefits only. Therefore, in the natural state of things, without a governing authority, men would be in constant war with each other. However, Hobbes also proclaims that human beings, having the ability of rational thinking, can realize that "peace is good, and therefore also the way or means of peace are good"

and therefore seek peace and take the necessary measures, although it may mean dispensing one's "right to all things". Despite associating freedom with the satisfaction of one's desires, Hobbes, nevertheless, makes desires subsumed by reason.

For another British thinker of the following century, David Hume (1711-1776), rationality is insufficient to make moral judgments. In his *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morality*, He argues that reason judges either "matters of facts" or "matters of relations". Morality, on the other hand, never consists in any single matter of fact that could be immediately perceived, intuited, or grasped by reason alone. Moreover, reason alone cannot be the motivation for an action but it is the sentiment that guides one to undertake certain actions. However, Hume also opposes Hobbes' selfish moralism in that morality cannot be reduced to self-interest alone. He replaces self-interest with sympathy and benevolence, which enables one to respond in a way independent of one's own benefits. … a "general" or "common point of view," detached from our self-interested perspectives, to form "some general unalterable standard, by which we may approve or disapprove of characters and manners." some sentiment, so universal and comprehensive as to extend to all mankind, and render the actions and conduct, even of the persons the most remote, an object of applause or censure, according as they agree or disagree with that rule of right which is established. These two requisite circumstances belong alone to the sentiment of humanity here insisted on" (*Enquiry*, 272). It is the *extended* or *extensive* sentiment of humanity — benevolence or sympathy — that for Hume is ultimately "the foundation of morals." The general character of moral language, produced and promoted by our social sympathies, permits us to judge ourselves and others from the general point of view, the proper perspective of morality. For Hume,

that is "…the most perfect morality with which we are acquainted" (*Enquiry*, 276). Hume's definition of *virtue*, or *Personal Merit* is then: "every quality of the mind, which is *useful* or *agreeable* to the *person himself* or to *others*, communicates a pleasure to the spectator, engages his esteem, and is admitted under the honorable denomination of virtue or merit" (*Enquiry*, 277).

Finally, it is important to note that, despite the fact that Hume appears to compromise the moral rationalists like Descartes and Locke with moral egotists like Spinoza and Hobbes, and his statement "Reason is, and ought only to be, slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (*Treatise*, 462) should not mislead one to think that eventually sexuality is acknowledged as a natural and not unworthy aspect of human nature; the distinction Hume observes between sentiments leads once again to ruling out erotic desire as "gross and vulgar". In *A Treatise of Human Nature* he writes: "Kindness or esteem, and the appetite to generation, are too remote to unite easily. The one is, perhaps, the most refin'd passion of the soul; the other is the most gross and vulgar." (443).

The ascendancy of reason that started with the Age of Reason was carried to its culmination first with Immanuel Kant and then Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, the two great philosophers of German Idealism. The questions of subjective point of view and objectivity as well as the nature of self that were brought to the foreground by Descartes were taken up by Kant and the self acquired a transcendental quality which dominated the scene of philosophical thinking until Hegel[36], and even after.

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[36] Although the tradition of idealism reached to its culmination with Hegel, he continued to be an important landmark for thinkers after him not only for his being the figure who, in a sense, concluded a tradition that had been dominant for more than two millennia but also for his formulating many of the concepts that would constitute the milestones of the future discourses of desire, as well as history and politics.

Kant defined consciousness as a concept independent of the individual, as an eternal absolute which the human being may partake through the use of reason. Although man had his own perception of the external world constructed in his mind, this by no means meant that there was no truth beyond the phenomenal world. Man could arrive at these by use of what Kant referred to as the categorical imperatives: universal principles and a priori concepts. His firm belief in a universal good led him to conclude that once independent of individual preferences and desires, human mind is capable of attaining the absolute truth and good. Although he objected to the philosophers preceding him with his radical critique of metaphysics in the sense that there is a reality beyond the visible external world independent of the individual, he maintained their antagonistic relation to erotic desire, perhaps using a language more debilitating than they did. He writes: "In loving from sexual inclination, they make the person into an object of their appetite. As soon as the person is possessed, the appetite sated, they are thrown away as one throws away a lemon after sucking the juice from it" (*Lectures*, 156). He further adds that:

> So if a man wishes to satisfy his inclination, and a woman hers, they each attract the other's inclination to themselves, and both urges impinge on one another, and are directed not to humanity at all but to sex, and each partner dishonors the humanity of the other. Thus humanity becomes an instrument for satisfying desires and inclinations; but by this it is dishonored and put on a par with animal nature. So the sexual impulse puts humanity in peril of being equated with animality. (156).

For Kant, sexuality is the only case "where a human being would already be determined by nature to be the object of another's enjoyment. … This is the reason why we are ashamed of possessing such an impulse, and why all strict moralists, and those who wish to be taken for saints, have sought to repress and dispense with it" (156) He indicates marriage to be the only condition in which sexual experience could be permissible, because marriage is a surrender of the self not only bodily but

as a whole: “The sole condition, under which there is freedom to make use of one’s sexual impulse, is based upon the right to dispose over the whole person. This right to dispose over the other’s whole person relates to the total state of happiness, and to all circumstances bearing upon that person” (158). Moreover, in marriage the objectifying process involved in the sexual act is mutual: “they mutually accord equal rights to one another, and submit to the condition that each transfers his whole person entirely to the other, so that each has complete right to the other’s whole person” (158). For a person with such a rigid attitude to sexuality, prostitution is unthinkable: “Nothing is more vile than to take money for yielding to another so that his inclination may be satisfied and to let one’s own person out for hire” (157).

For Hegel freedom is the crucial term for the development of humanity in history. The factor distinguishing humans from animals is their intelligence as not only rational beings but more importantly spiritual beings. The recognition of their being spiritual is the key to their salvation from the materiality of the natural world that they live in. This understanding leads Hegel to what he calls “religious self-consciousness”, an awareness that makes the human beings realize that spiritual world is their true home. Human beings have the potential to change the external world according to their expectations and it is Christian spirituality that should transform the world through the spiritual idea of love, which was initiated in the Greek tradition as we have seen with Plato.

This awareness can be achieved by freeing oneself from the prison of individual natural desires. Hegel had a high esteem for The Reformation, and considered the German nation more advanced in the development of mind and freedom in history since they were the ones who actualized the reformation of the corrupted Christianity. He believed in the necessity of transforming the world in line

with the principles of Reformation according to the rules of rationality, which was the only guarantee for achieving universal assent. Hegel contravened the idea of subjective freedom or free exercise of one's desires. He said, "If we hear it said that the definition of freedom is the ability to do what we please, such an idea can only be taken to reveal an utter immaturity of thought, for it contains not even an inkling of the absolutely free will, of right, ethical life, and so forth" (qtd in Singer p.34). For Hegel was convinced that the freedom of the society and its rational organization had to precede the individual freedom, because when the organization of the society is based on reason it would automatically follow that individuals acting with their own rationality and conscience would not be in conflict with it, and there would be perfect harmony. In the confrontation of the individual with the social, Hegel opts for the latter, since his philosophy relies on a disavowal of the particular for the universal.

Therefore, in the section entitled "Pleasure and Necessity" in his *Phenomenology of Mind*, he advocates individuals' obedience to necessity instead of his pleasure which will not take them anywhere being based on the particular. His main argument against desire other than its being particular is that be it biological or social, desires are not consciously chosen by the individuals and therefore one is not free when s/he acts from desire. Therefore, people must free themselves from the reign of desires to be truly free and. to be able to act as they choose.

The emphasis on the self as a thinking being that started in the seventeenth century and continued throughout the Enlightenment led to a detailed analysis of every aspect of human existence. The statement "humani nil a me alienum puto" ("Nothing human is foreign to me") from the Roman playwright Terentius' play *Heautontimoroumenos* (*The Self-Tormentor*) became the motto of Enlightenment period (Solomon, 12). However, as obvious from the brief overview of the most

important philosophers of the period who set the mood both in England and on the continent, not everything human was an equally significant aspect of human existence, since eroticism was. Interestingly enough, perhaps because the total divorce of the body from the soul and the mind is achieved in the Age of Reason and body's full subservience to mind is idealized at the utmost degree, during this period the narratives of desire became even more verbose and explicit than it had ever been in the history of Western culture. Besides, it is important to note that Europe saw a profusion of libertines in this period. Just as Lacan suggests, the Law creates its transgression and by that premise it is possible to deduce that the more forceful the Law is, the greater the desire to transgress becomes. It may be seen as no coincidence that Kant and Marquis de Sade are contemporaries.

In *Satyricon* and *Decameron,* aside from overt statements of sexual intercourse taking place and statement of the beauty of both male and female body, there were no descriptions of the physical body or the sexual act. The emphasis was on the pleasure derived from sexuality rather than the act itself. In these narratives as well as the other sexually explicit narratives in antiquity and Middle Ages, the obscenest detail one would encounter was the metaphorical allusion to male erection. On the other hand, the eighteenth century Western literature - the very period following a century of ascending emphasis on the mind as opposed to body and its desires - abound with narratives of obscenity.

Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure, otherwise known as *Fanny Hill*, by John Cleland is considered the first example of erotica in English literature. *Fanny Hill* was published in two installments in November 1748 and February 1749 and the government action against the novel began in November 1749 (Sabor, 561). The bishop Thomas Sherlock even held the book responsible for the two minor

earthquakes which occurred in 1750 in London due to its "immoral" content (Probyn, 149). The novel soon became an underground bestseller but was destined to be marginalized for the following two centuries of prosecution (Mudge 2004, 28). When the novel was finally published in the United States in 1963, the publisher was prosecuted and finally cleared first by the New York State Supreme Court and later by the US Supreme Court in 1966. The edition published in Britain however, was found obscene in the same year and the novel was not safe from censorship until the 1970s (Sabor, 562). The passage where a homosexual relationship was referred to could take place only in the 1985 editions of Oxford University Press and Penguin (565).

Whether *Fanny Hill* is a pornographic novel is an important question to be addressed. In *When Flesh Becomes Word: An Anthology of Early Eighteenth-Century Libertine Literature,* Bradford Mudge informs us that the so-called pornographic works of the eighteenth century English Literature were "all compelled by the desirability of making private knowledge public. Unlike modern pornographers, whose central purpose is to arouse the audience, these works take special pains to educate as well as entertain" (30). The distinction he observes between the pornographic material and books like Fanny Hill is significant as that is where the borderline that distinguishes them from pornography lies.

In a conversation with James Boswell, John Cleland referred to Fanny Hill as "a work of youth, enthusiastic and indiscreet" and claimed his motive in writing the novel to be his desire "to prove to a friend that one could represent sexual pleasure without the coarseness and offensive language that characterized L'Ecole

des Filles" [37] (qtd in Mudge 2004, 28-29). Mudge concludes from this proclamation that "*Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* was conceived, in other words, as an aesthetic experiment, self-consciously opposed to the tradition from which it emerged" (29). Considering the addressee of the novel, the seriousness of the subjects raised up by means of the so-called pornographic experience of the protagonist and her friends, it would be too easy to dismiss *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* as a novel intended solely to arouse its audience. Beneath the obscene surface content, there is the aesthetic experimentation with language, which Cleland attested his true intention to be, as well as the witty questioning of the philosophical ideals and the literary arguments of the times.

Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (hereafter *Fanny Hill*) is the story of a young woman, Fanny Hill, who becomes a prostitute as a result of the misfortunes she confronts in life, but eventually ends up marrying her sweetheart. After her parents pass away, Fanny leaves her village for town to seek her destiny there. From the start, Fanny is depicted as a free spirit who has potential to contradict the dictates of the society about the roles of women and use of her body. As soon as she arrives in town, she is picked by a woman who plans to sell her virginity in return for a good bargain. However, before her machinations succeed, Fanny runs away with a young man, Charles, each falling in love with the other at first sight. Unfortunately, Charles' father sends him abroad, mostly to put an end to their affair. Fanny is then

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[37] *L'Ecole des Filles ou la Philosophie des dames* (a so-called whore dialogue) is an erotic work of fiction described by Samuel Pepys in his famous diary. It was first published anonymously in Paris in 1655. (http://www.artandpopularculture.com/L'%C3%89cole_des_filles) "Whore dialogues" were a popular literary genre during the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. These are dramatic conversations between an older, experienced woman and a younger, inexperienced maiden. They combine sex education, medical folklore, and erotic literature. It is a striking aspect of this early European erotica that there are so many female protagonists. "Female dialogues" became a literary device that was to used by Marquis de Sade in *Juliette* as well as Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.
(http://www.artandpopularculture.com/Whore_dialogue?PHPSESSID=a43fe8728fddef1173f7ce05f92f3125)

forced into a series of affairs to survive and finally ends up in a brothel where she succumbs to her fate and begins to "enjoy" the obligations of her profession. The narrative incorporates not only Fanny's various erotic adventures but also the erotic stories of the young girls she meets throughout. After a period of excessive enjoyment of *jouissance* – for the narrative presents it as if these girls do not have sex for money but for their own pleasure –, she finally "retires". Having inherited some money from Mrs. Cole, the madam of the brothel she worked for, she marries Charles. They live happily ever after without the least concern for financial problems.

Written in the epistolary form, the protagonist Fanny Hill addresses a woman reader, as *Decameron* was. Writing in epistolary form was not uncommon in the eighteenth century when the novel was a young genre. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and Henry Fielding's parody of this novel, *Shamela*, both very popular at the time, are also written in epistolary form. Pamela's letters are addressed to her parents, especially her mother and *Shamela* is written in the form of exchange of letters by various characters. *Pamela*, as its subtitle "Virtue Rewarded" indicates, is the story of a young maid, Pamela Andrews, who is a paragon of virtue. She resists her master's all attempts at seducing her and never deviates from virtue. Her refinement of character is finally "rewarded" at the end of the novel as she marries her master. Fielding' *Shamela* is a parody of Richardson's *Pamela*, in which he ridicules almost every aspect of Richardson's narrative. In *Shamela*, Fielding pretends to be telling the true story of Pamela. In Fielding's narrative it is revealed that the real name of the protagonist of the novel *Pamela* is actually Shamela and she is not an embodiment of virtue as she pretends to be, but is actually a scheming woman who tries to trick her master to marry her to elevate herself socially. She

proves to be capable of all sorts of scheming and betrayal including adultery. Fielding's intention in writing *Shamela*, is to mock Richardson's middle class morality and sentiment in *Pamela*.

As some critics also suggested, Cleland's *Fanny Hill* is also a reaction to *Pamela* and a mockery of the virtues its protagonist represents. In *Pamela*, the chastity of a girl becomes a kind of commodity in a society where capitalism had recently begun to flourish; it is rewarded with wealth and status in society. On the other hand, in *Fanny Hill* Cleland tells the stories of the young girls whose bodies are commodified but who are still "rewarded" at the end of the novel, with marriage or other happy endings. The name of Cleland's protagonist, Fanny Hill, is not without its associations to Shamela and Fielding's other novel was also written in reaction to *Pamela*, *Joseph Andrews*. *Shamela* is dedicated to a "Miss Fanny" and in *Joseph Andrews*, the beloved of Joseph Andrews, with whom he desperately tries to get married throughout the novel, is called Fanny Goodwill. The choice of this name for his protagonist is Cleland's overt play on the name of the good and virtuous girl friend of Joseph Andrews. Instead of a paragon of virtue, Cleland's protagonist is a woman who does the vilest thing in Kant's terms.

The initial introduction of Fanny herself to the unnamed woman addressee has important implications about the rest of the narrative. She introduces herself as a woman who gained "observation on the characters and manners of the world" through experiences of pleasure afforded by her young and healthy body. Hence, as soon as the narrative begins, the bodily experience and its pleasures are asserted to be a prominent means of gaining knowledge of life and truth for the protagonist. By proclaiming Fanny's experience as a prostitute as the means to gain knowledge about life and more importantly "characters and manners of the world", Cleland subverts

the conflict foreseen between reason and bodily desires by the philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century:

> Madam,
> I sit down to give you an undeniable proof of my considering your desires as indispensable orders; ungracious then as the task may be, I shall recall to view those scandalous stages of my life, out of which I emerged, at length, to the enjoyment of every blessing in the power of love, health, and fortunate to bestow, whilst yet in the flower of youth, and not too late to employ the leisure afforded me by great ease and affluence, to cultivate an understanding, naturally not a despicable one, and which had, even amidst the whirl of loose pleasures I had been tossed in, *exerted more observation on the characters and manners of the world* than what is common to those of my unhappy profession, who, looking on *all thought or reflection as their capital enemy*, keep it at as great a distance as they can, or destroy it without mercy. (15)

This introduction to the novel indicates that passions do not necessarily shadow the intellect. Mudge says that her "promiscuity has led her nicely to wisdom and morality and the perfect middle-class marriage" (213). The choice of making his protagonist reach wisdom via the life of a prostitute on Cleland's part also seems to be a caricaturization of Locke's statement that it is the sensations – together with reflection, of course – which shape the human mind. With the uttermost enjoyment of her body and senses, Fanny claims to have gained a vast understanding of life.

Having stated that she enough experience and observation about people and life in general, Fanny goes on to explain to her reader the manner in which she will be writing her story. She will narrate the events as they actually took place without concealing anything for the sake of moral rules:

> Truth! Stark, naked truth, is the word; and I will not so much as take the pains to bestow the strip of a gauze wrapper on it, but paint situations such as they actually rose to me in nature; careless of violating those laws of decency that were never made for such unreserved intimacies of ours; and you have too much sense, too much knowledge of the ORIGINALS, to snuff prudishly and out of character at the PICTURES of them. The greatest men, those of the first and most leading taste, will not scruple adorning their

> private closets with nudities, though, in compliance with vulgar prejudices they may not think them decent decorations of the stair-case or saloon. (15)

Thus, at the very beginning of the novel, the necessity of observing moral rules in narration, forsaking the narration of events as they actually took place for decency, is posited as the true enemy of reality and realism. The question of representing reality was an important subject of discussion in the middle of the eighteenth century when the novel was flourishing as a respectable genre. Ian Watt, in his seminal work *The Rise of the Novel*, observes the continuity between the philosophical atmosphere of the period and the emergence of the novel as a genre. He states that both the scientific revolution with the impetus it gave to the urge to discover the principles underlying nature in general and human nature in particular and the rise of individualism in the eighteenth century had a crucial influence on the attitude of writing that characterizes the novel. The concern with the individuals and their reality as well as the general truths about life was the central problem of the novel. As Mudge states, the debate centered around the role and the form the novel was supposed to take, as well as the true nature of the human: "Was it to be the extended sermon of Richardson or the comic epic in prose touted by Fielding? - and the 'real' nature of the men and women depicted within: Are 'real' women saint-like virgins, like Pamela, or scheming whores, like Shamela?" (2004 28). Cleland's *Fanny Hill* participated in the discussion by offering "yet another novelistic 'realism', an imaginary narrative in which characters actively pursued a 'real' sexual pleasure that was in turn vicariously accessible" (28). Mudge argues that in the novel "[l]ove and lust … do not … compromise each other because corporeal desire is an appetite like hunger whose appeasement is natural rather than sinful. Throughout the novel, Fanny will participate in sexual activity – sometimes for money, sometimes for love, sometimes for spite, sometimes to escape boredom, sometimes only because

she wants to feel sexual pleasure – yet she is allowed to retain her character, her essential humanity, her innate and indissoluble 'goodness' because – in the logic of the narrative – she is 'real'" (2000 203), whereas neither Richardson nor Fielding portray "real women" (213).

With this opening, through Fanny, Cleland actually addresses his reader and as Mudge mentions, reminds them of the twofold responsibility of the novelist: to tell the "truth" of nature and preserve the "unreserved intimac[y]" between writer and reader. "The first requires that the 'stark naked truth' of sexual pleasure be fairly represented; the second demands that the "laws of decency" and "vulgar prejudices" of our public lives not interfere with the authenticity of "private" communication" (32) since everyone is already familiar and well-informed about the events in question and there need not be reason to be disturbed by their narration. Hence, by writing *Fanny Hill*, a book about a prostitute, and without restraining from narrating erotic desire and explicit descriptions of sexual intercourse, Cleland enriches and redefines the human reality by adding to it what had been systematically excluded from the philosophical discourses for centuries. However, what he included was to be denied to the reading public in general and *Fanny Hill* has only recently found its way into the curricula of the courses at universities and scholarly books. [38]

In addition to including what was previously excluded, Cleland also wittily incorporates into his narrative the very discourses that marginalized body and its desires only to subvert them. Mark the following passage, for instance, where Fanny describes one of her many love-makings in the novel:

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[38] Many scholarly books which discuss the rise of the novel in the eighteenth century by prominent writers rarely mention John Cleland and almost never mention *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*.

> I had it now, I felt it now; and beginning to drive, he soon gave nature such a powerful summons down to her favorite quarters that she could no longer refuse repairing thither. All my animal spirits then rushed mechanically to that center of attraction , and presently, inly warmed and stirred as I was beyond bearing, I lost all restraint, and yielding to the force of the emotion, gave down, as mere woman, those effusions of pleasure, which, in the strictures of still faithful love, O could have wished to have held up. (84)

The mention of animal spirits in this quotation is an explicit reference to the seventeenth century vision of the human body as a machine, especially to that of Descartes, who, in his *Treatise on Man*, explains every response of the human body to its surrounding in terms of a clockwork mechanism. Descartes explains that it is what he calls the animal spirits that move through the "arteries and tubules", fill in or empty the pores, that cause the body to move and respond to outside stimuli. He also states psychological states to be related to the distribution of the animal spirits (Hatfield, 346). Cleland, in making Fanny describe the immense pleasure she drives from sex with the vocabulary of Descartes's physiology, and thereby bringing together two subjects that were considered to be incompatible, obviously makes fun of the seventeenth century reductionism of human sensations to mere workings of a mechanism.

The references to contemporary philosophical arguments are infused into the narrative and are immediately visible to the learned readers. Another instance is the series of metaphors used to describe the erect male organ, overt allusions to the discourses of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century, characterized by admiration to the new advancements in science and technology: engine of love; machine; furious engine; stiff, thick indriven engine, weapon.

Although it may be not as versatile as the metaphors employed to describe the male genitalia, female genitalia is described in *Fanny Hill* in a way that defies the centuries old conception the female sexual organ as an absence, a lack. It has been

suggested that “Fanny pays some attention to female bodies, but her overwhelming concern is with the male form, and especially with the male genitalia” (Sabor, 563). While this is true, it is also important to note that as Fanny’s understanding of her body and its pleasures improve, the metaphors used to describe the female organ become more varied and suggestive of its peculiarity, as different from the male organ. Fanny’s discovery of her own body, interestingly, starts with a lesbian relation. Having run out of money, Fanny moves in with a woman to work as a maid. However, she does not realize the place to be a brothel. She is obliged to share her bed with a girl, Phoebe, whose real intention is to help Fanny realize her body’s potential for pleasure. When Phoebe is assured by Fanny’s reactions to her advances that she is ready to witness the kind of pleasures man can make one experience, she takes Fanny to watch secretly one of the girls in the household in intercourse with a man. After what she has seen, Fanny decides to abandon Phoebe, or rather her “flat” and “hollow” organ, for the male one. Her relations with men will not only enable her to realize the “power” of male sex but also the immense capacity the “flat” and “hollow” organ of hers to give pleasure to her. Hence, the more desirous she becomes, the more the metaphors to describe the female organ proliferate and become more explicit: ever sensible part, small tender part, slit, soft passage, tender texture of the tract, torn tender folds, cloven spot, tender opening, soft strait passage, pouting lipped mouth, deep fresh wound, soft pleasure-conduit mouth, furnace mouth, mouth of the draught… (in the order they appear in the text). Hence, rather than treating the female organ as nonexistent, Cleland actually attributes it a presence that is uncommon in the history of literature, and even the medical treatises written thence far.

Although she is tricked into staying at a brothel where the madam plans to sell her virginity, Fanny does not lose her virginity there and in return for money. Her first sexual experience is with Charles, a boy she meets at the brothel where she had been waiting for her virginity to be "sold" for the best price. She and Charles fall in love with each other at first sight, and run away from the brothel secretly. Thus, the designs to sell Fanny's virginity fail, but thereby, she gets the chance to get acquainted with the pleasures of sex with a man she loves. However, when Charles is obliged to abandon her, she is left penniless in a town which she hardly knows. Despite her deep grief, she is forced into being the mistress of one Mr.H[39]. This is how she explains her position: "I had neither the virtue nor the courage not to outlive the separation" (86). Fanny is a survivor, someone aiming at self-preservation no matter what. Characterization of Fanny as a survivor in any condition is actually taking the ideas of *conatus* and psychological egotism by Spinoza and Hobbes, respectively, to their logical conclusions. It is obvious that, acting upon reason and disregarding emotions, the only solution left for Fanny is acceding to becoming the mistress of this wealthy man who can also protect her in this unfamiliar town.

The relation with Mr. H gives Fanny the chance to compare and contrast him with Charles. Although she loves Charles, she thinks Mr. H is manlier. However, in her comparison of pleasure in sex without emotions and pleasure in sex lived between lovers, love triumphs, not due to the degree of pleasure it provides but the permanence of feeling though:

> Yet oh! What an immense difference did I feel between this impression of a pleasure merely animal, and struck out of the collision of the sexes by a passive bodily effect, from that sweet fury, that urge of active delight which crowns the enjoyments of a mutual love-passion, where two

[39] Cleland leaves some characters' names as initials to render his story more credible.

> hearts, tenderly and truly united, club to exalt the joy, and give it a spirit and soul that bids defiance to that end which mere momentary desires generally terminates in, when they die of a surfeit of satisfaction. (85)

As Mudge also argues, the comparison helps redeem Fanny's conscience by pointing out that despite her submission, Fanny remains faithful to her love in her heart and thereby indicating the possible return of Charles at the end of the novel; but at the same time testifies to the fact that however much she loves Charles, Fanny's body betrays her and emerges out to be uncontrollable: "… she convulses in pleasure against her will and better judgment" (205). When passions overtake, judgment becomes ineffective – a fact narrated without the least implication of its being an undesirable consequence unlike the emphasis put on judgment by the philosophers. Cleland's emphasis is on pleasure which effaces other considerations.

This initial experience of "pleasure merely animal" with only a "bodily effect" serves as the beginning of Fanny's interest in developing the capacity of her body to feel pleasure. When she finds out that Mr.H is fooling around with the servant girl, she plans to avenge herself by sleeping with his simple valet. Fanny's experience with Mr.H's valet with a huge organ is in her words "one great revolution in her life". The experience is revolutionary for her both because she thereby discovers solely bodily pleasure without any mental or emotional involvement and because she realizes the fact that pleasure is more exalted in lower people than those with "false ridiculous refinements … cheated by their pride" (107). Mudge argues that Fanny becomes a professional [40] with this experience because by having sex

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[40] Mudge's choice of the word becoming "professional" to define Fanny's experience is interesting. There is yet no indication in the novel that Fanny will become a prostitute. Moreover, she is driven to seduce the valet both to take her revenge and perhaps to satisfy her newly-awakened curiosity about the sexuality of other people. She does it neither for money nor with the intention of turning it into a profession. It seems that referring to the situation as becoming a "professional" is unjustified within the context of the point the story has reached and rather conveys Mudge's prejudice about enjoying solely bodily sex.

with someone of lower status, without education, experience, feelings and hence self, she discovers pure physicality, sex with lack of self; "because she has sex only to have sex, only to feel pleasure and satisfy her own desires… Fanny is now committed to sexual passion" (206). However, there is further significance in Fanny's observation of the difference between the "lower people" and the so-called "refined" characters. Firstly, Fanny's contrasting the uncultivated lad with the refinements of people of higher status subverts the earlier tradition of higher forms of narratives of desire, such as the courtly love of the romances or the platonic love of the sonnet tradition. As discussed in the earlier chapter, Andreas Capellanus disqualified peasants from the ability of enjoying courtly love whereas Fanny singles them out as the ones to be capable of experiencing utmost pleasure in sex. Secondly, Fanny's surrender to the physical pleasures despite her "better judgment" marks her retreat from the symbolic and gradual indulgence in *jouissance*. Fanny defies the social norms and Mr. H's authority over her as her protector and benefactor by engaging in intercourse with someone else and immensely enjoying it only for pleasure and revenge. The singling out of the so-called "uncultivated" as capable of enjoying *jouissance* better than those with "false ridiculous refinements … cheated by their pride" indicates the distance of the former from the symbolic and hence their ability to enjoy non-phallic *jouissance*, which is, as stated earlier, the utmost transgression in Lacanian terms. The latter, on the other hand, the "refined" people as Fanny calls tem, are unable to escape the phallic economy for their excessive concern for the values of the symbolic, are destined to remain in what Lacan calls the *jouissance* of the idiot.

This kind of total submission to the symbolic economy and overvaluation of its attributes makes certain characters victims at the hands of Fanny and her

friends. For instance, when Fanny finally has to become a prostitute to support herself, Mrs.Cole, the owner of the brothel tells her that it is in the tradition of the profession to start as a virgin, even when one is not. Therefore, she proposes to help Fanny to trick someone into believing that Fanny is a virgin. She eventually invites Mr.Norbert, an old and almost impotent man, for this reason. The fake scene of losing virginity to fool Mr. Norbert shows how it is male fantasy that is deluded, and that the men readily believe in their own fictions. Blind to his impotence and inability to give any pleasure to women, Mr.Norbert is ready to believe in Fanny's feigned fears, anxiety and moanings of pleasure. "We laugh at his vanity, at his delusion, and most of all, at his profound ignorance of 'real' women and their 'real' sexual pleasures" (Mudge 2000, 208). Moreover, the scene is a reversal of the scenes seen in eighteen century novels, especially in *Pamela*, in which the innocent girls are seduced by the older and more experienced men.

Despite Mr. Norbert's inefficiency, Fanny is so eager to feel pleasure that she tries her best to get whatever she can from her experience with him. However, she fails to do so, not because Mr. Norbert is totally unable to give her any but because he "kept [her] so much the mistress of [her] mind and motion that [she] could the better manage so close a counterfeit" (166). Her having to fool Mr.Norbert, check his responses and prepare the details of the fake scene for that end occupied her mind so much that she could hardly concentrate on her own pleasure, and manage only a poor semblance. This explanation also reveals a subversion of the philosophical idea that it is the passions that shadow the mind. Fanny, on the other hand, posits mind to be a hindrance in front of one's passions and pleasure. It is only a matter of perspective, then, to give priority to aspects of human nature and perceive one as a hindrance for the other.

At the beginning of Part II, Fanny supposedly apologizes from the reader for having to repeat the similar words in delineating her sexual adventures for lack of a variety of words to describe the experience sufficiently:

> I imagined, indeed, that you would have been cloyed and tired with the uniformity of adventures and expressions inseparable from a subject of this sort, whose bottom, or groundwork being, in the nature of things, eternally one and the same, whatever variety of forms and modes the situations are susceptible of, there is no escaping a repetition of near the same images, the same figures, the same expressions, with this further inconvenience added to the disgust it creates, that the words JOYS, ARDOURS, TRANSPORTS, ECSTASIES, and the rest of those pathetic terms so congenial to, so received in the PARCTICE OF PLEASURE, flatten and lose much of their due spirit and energy by the frequency they indispensably recur with, in a narrative of which that PRACTICE professedly composes the whole basis. (115)

Although this statement appears to be an apology at the superficial level, its taking place soon after her proclamation that pleasure is better enjoyed with people from "lower status" and the use of the phrase "due spirit" immediately after "disgust" gives away the fact that Fanny is only pretending to be apologizing. It is actually Cleland making fun of the tradition of repentant criminal protagonists of the novels of the time. Moreover, this so-called apology is actually an acknowledgement of the fact that *jouissance*, being beyond the symbolic, do not lend themselves to language because they belong to the real of the imaginary. She therefore leaves the appreciation of the true implication of the events she narrates to the imagination of the reader rather than trying to convey the feeling in writing in vain.

Fanny is a woman who revels in the pleasures of her body. Throughout the narrative there is almost never any mention of the male pleasure, but only ejaculation. Fanny and all her woman friends, whom she secretly or overtly watches as they have sex with men or with whom she engages in group sex, all experience orgasm and simultaneously with men. However, Cleland does not state it as an

important feature of the sexual intercourse as D.H. Lawrence or J.G. Ballard do, as will be seen in the following chapters. The narrative is quite reticent about the male pleasure, the reasons for which may be manifold. It is possible to argue that Cleland narrates men as in standard pornographic material where men are the competent "givers" of pleasure and women are readily available and hyper-responsive to their every touch. However, there are indications that point at an alternative interpretation. Cleland focuses on how the female body looks and is touched, and how women enjoy the experience without the least indication of a condescending attitude. Although most of the sexual acts take place in return for money, there is no mention of any financial transaction, neither between the lady running the brothel and the girls nor between men and women. Men enter the scene with the obvious reason of enjoying sexual pleasure and depart as soon as their desire is satisfied. The brief introduction of men into the story coupled with instances of how they are tricked or ridiculed by women create the impression that they are only utilized for the satisfaction of women rather than their own desires. Hence, what comes to the foreground is the female *jouissance*, the ultimate transgressive power that undermines not only the discursive production of desire but also male authority social, economic and cultural realms.

Critic Robert Markley argues that Cleland's intention in making the story of Fanny end with marriage is to preach middle class morality (353). However, such an assumption precludes the possibility of narrating promiscuity with such an explicit language. Moreover, Fanny displays no signs of repentance, other than those feigned one which point at a mocking of rather than promotion of middle class morality. Even while she is writing her story sometime later in her life, after her days as a prostitute is way past, she cannot help being overwhelmed with the pleasant

memories of past pleasures and is obliged to give a break to writing, implying the reader should do the same. She even criticizes men for imposing too much sobriety on women an thereby limiting their own pleasures. In addition, the fact that such a promiscuous woman like Fanny is "rewarded" with marriage and affluence at the end of the narrative is in total contradiction to the narratives that truly preach bourgeois morality, as in *Pamela*.

In *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, Cleland reverses the hierarchical order inherent in the ages old binary of body and mind, giving precedence to body and its pleasures over mind and soul. He undermines the arguments for rational thinking by carrying it to its ultimate conclusions under certain circumstances Fanny finds herself and render reason ineffective. He thereby implies reason's contingency as opposed to the absoluteness and eternity the professed by philosophers to be its intrinsic characteristic. Cleland not only alludes the dominant rationalist discourse in contexts that are otherwise incompatible but also responds to the literary arguments of his time. By narrating an integral reality of human existence, erotic desire, he tries to reincorporate into philosophical discourse and literary narratives what had been left out for the sake of proclaimed ideals. He thereby shows that under the pretense of rational and/or scientific engagement with human nature and realism lie an ulterior reality that awaits being discovered. His is an attempt on his part to eroticize desire which had been rationalized in discourse and literature.

CHAPTER VI

INTRODUCTION TO DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIPS: NARRATING EROTIC DESIRE THROUGH DISCOURSES ON DESIRE

It is impossible to argue that the philosophical milieu has been consistently uniform and the dominant discourses gone unchallenged throughout the ages. In antiquity, for instance, the sophists upheld a subjective view of knowledge and relativity of reality in contradiction to Platonic and Aristotelian absolute ideals. It was the controversy inherent in Christian philosophy that led to the Reformation and the difficulty of reconciling faith and reason that caused their dissolution with the Age of Reason. From the Renaissance onwards there have been a plethora of ideas and opposing views. However, a radical questioning of metaphysics started in the nineteenth century which, in Foucaultian terms, occasioned an epistemic rupture[41] by mid-century which shifted the current of philosophical thinking permanently from an epistemological questioning to an ontological doubt.

This radical break in the nineteenth century came about as a result of the loss of more than two thousand years of faith in man's reason. Even when, in the Medieval Period, faith in God held a more central importance than reason confidence in rational thinking preserved its prominence in Christian philosophers' teachings, it being the means to attain God's knowledge and thereby his love. Idealist philosophies that relied on reason for the achievement of the sublimated ideal

[41] Foucault explains that the codes of a culture construct the *episteme*, that is the configuration of knowledge, that determines the empirical orders and social practices of a social era links (*Archaeology*, 211).

reached their culmination with Hegel in the early nineteenth century. However, as early as the mid-nineteenth century, there began a questioning of Kantian and Hegelian confidence in a universal absolute, a "supra-consciousness" that manifests itself through the individual and the cult of the self. German philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), despite retaining a belief in universals, argued for the dissolution of the self and dismissal of all individual will to avoid the suffering that is intrinsic to life. Schopenhauer introduced the concept of the "Wille zum Leben" (will-to-live) and gave priority to desire before thought, albeit a negative concept of desire, which had its impact on the succeeding philosophers. Nevertheless, this pessimistic attitude reiterated the negation of life found in earlier philosophical discourses. Another important philosopher of the period was Danish Søren Kierkegaard (1813-55) who criticized Hegel for his negation of life and disregard of the individual for unanimity. As opposed to Hegel, Kierkegaard emphasized the individual and subjective engagement with the world, without disregarding the importance of objective truth. He also argued for a personal ethics, which was beyond knowledge and reason. The ideas of Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard were quite radical, especially after a milieu of ascending German Idealism, but the true epistemic rupture, was to come with Nietzsche's groundbreaking philosophy of nihilism, after which human desire was to acquire an important standing within the dominant discourses, one that would permanently alter both the ways of thinking and the relationship of the writers to them. With Nietzsche, consciousness is robbed of its stature as the seat of absolutes and the highest human characteristic, and is endowed with the forces of contingency.

Nietzsche (1844-1900) questioned the metaphysical thinking inherent in almost every dominant philosophical discourse prior to his time. In *The Birth of*

Tragedy, he celebrates the Greek god, Dionysus, whose cult involves people's losing themselves with music and intoxication by drinking too much wine. For Nietzsche, the Dionysian ritual implied the abandonment of both language and the self. This ecstatic state not only freed people from the prison of the self but also relieved them of the sense of the transitory nature of human life, thereby, in a sense enabling them to achieve a feeling of discontinuity. Nietzsche tells the story of King Midas who searches in the forest for Dionysus' companion, the wise demi-god Silenus, in order to find the answer to his question "what is the best and most desirable of all things for man?". Silenus answers him, saying that "What is best for all is utterly beyond [his] reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best … is – to die soon" (42). Nietzsche writes that the Greeks could bear the "terror and horror of existence" as stated explicitly by wise Silenus with the help of Apollo. As was argued earlier, the prospect of death and man's mortality had always been considered an imperfection of human kind, and therefore led to the glorification of the eternal and the negation of life since antiquity. The conflicting relation between reason and desire had been embodied in the Greek Gods Apollo and Dionysus: Dionysus representing death and desire;[42] Apollo reason and order. Nietzsche believes that after the time of Socrates, the Apollonian philosophy of belief in the power of reason and order dominated the following 2000 years of Western philosophy, repressing the Dionysian spirit. He further argues that the rebirth of the European culture could be achieved by recovering the Dionysian spirit through releasing the creativity and joy of existence. Nietzsche's final call is for the unison of the powers of Apollo and

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[42] The association of desire with death had already been made in antiquity. The association had been endowed with different explications and theories since then. Nietzsche's observation about the association between the Dionysian spirit and the agony of existence look forward to Freud's theory about the death instinct as stated in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and Bataille's association of ecstasy in sexual relation with the feeling of losing the self and hence death.

Dionysus “in a strict proportion, according to the law of eternal justice,” so that the whole world of phenomenon called into existence by the Dionysian can be covered by the “veil of beauty” created by “the true artistic aim of Apollo” and tragedy of existence can be overcome (143-144). Hence, Nietzsche’s is a reaffirmation of life as opposed to its negation which had been the characteristic feature of discourses thus far.

Nietzsche also questions the Christian approach to life. He perceives Christian faith as a protracted suicide since it is a form of self-sacrifice as a result of self denial, sacrifice of freedom, pride and self-esteem as well as the self-mutilation it involves. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he explains that despite the self-sacrifice it entails, it is not easy for people to give up religion because it provides contentment. He states that the reason magic and witchcraft, atheism and the worship of false gods like Satanism, irrational behavior like madness and schizophrenia are all denoted as “evil”, is the fact that these elevate the individual above the group and thereby threaten the majority: Whatever is a threat is called evil. He includes eroticism among the evils Christianity constituted as threats and holds the Christian faith as the chief responsible system of thought among the other discourses before and after the Medieval Period for the common denotation of eroticism as vice: “Christianity gave eros poison to drink – he did not die of it, to be sure, but degenerated into vice” (aphorism 168, 53)

Nietzsche also questions the cult of reason and its epistemology that succeeded the Medieval Period. He pits inner necessity against Kant’s notion of morality based on reason and general law, and personal categorical imperative against Kant’s concept of a priori categorical imperatives. He argues that there must be a deep personal choice underlying one’s actions, otherwise one would turn into an

automaton of duty. Moreover, morality cannot be singular and the categorical imperative runs the risk of being confused with one's own categorical contentions. As Nietzsche says, "[t]here is no such thing as moral phenomena, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena" (aphorism 108, 48). He argues that moral beliefs are group beliefs – a herd instinct – and the weak seek collectivity to be strong to protect and justify themselves[43]. Virtue is praised by certain people only because they benefit from it.

As opposed to the general tendency of defining happiness and the means to achieve it, Nietzsche does not set the goal of life to be the attainment of happiness, which he sees as an obstacle in front of progress and human excellence:

> The discipline of suffering, of *great* suffering – know ye not that it is only *this* discipline that has produced all the elevations of humanity hitherto? The tension of soul in misfortune which communicates to it its energy, its shuddering in view of rack and ruin, its inventiveness and bravery in undergoing, enduring, interpreting, and exploiting misfortune, and whatever depth, mystery, disguise, spirit, artifice, or greatness has been bestowed upon the soul – has it not been bestowed through suffering, through the discipline of great suffering? (aphorism 225, 93-94)

He is also against preaching an ideal good and evil for all, hence idealization that is transcendent. His realization of the contingency of ideas, their relation to the social-cultural context leads to his denial of the possibility of a definition of good that can be agreed by all. It follows that democracy only means submission of the individual desire to the desire of the majority and therefore is not a desirable system for him.

Nietzsche realizes that both the common people's and the philosophers' thinking is always preceded by a desire, prejudice, inspiration or "desire of the heart" that is an irrational need or belief which they then proceed to make abstract and

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[43] Nietzsche's concept of "herd instinct" looks forward to the concept of "desire of the Other" by the existentialists and psychoanalysts, which define it as a source and guarantee of meaning and worth as well as acceptance and belonging in life.

defend with reason: “In the philosopher, … there is absolutely nothing impersonal; and above all, his morality furnishes a decided and decisive testimony as to *who he is* – that is to say, in what order the deepest impulses of his nature stand to each other” (aphorism 6, 5). “Philosophers wanted to give basis to morality – and even philosopher hitherto has believed that he has given it a basis; morality itself, however, has been regarded as something ‘given’” (55). What led him to this conclusion is the idea that “[o]ne loves ultimately one's desires, not the thing desired” (aphorism 175, 55), which implies that ultimately one’s ideals depend heavily on one’s desires.

However, Nietzsche’s stance is not a total repudiation of all morality; rather it is a proclamation of a “higher morality” which entails taking the responsibility of all of one’s actions without reliance on an external force for support. He argues that:

> “desire for “freedom of the will” in the superlative, metaphysical sense…the desire to bear the entire and ultimate responsibility for one's actions oneself, and to absolve God, the world, ancestors, chance, and society , therefrom involves nothing less than to be precisely this *causa sui* and…to pull oneself up into existence by the hair, out of the slough of nothingness.” (aphorism 21, 15)

Thus, Nietzsche’s philosophy of nihilism, his realization of the contingency of ideas and the fact that it is the individual’s desires as well as prejudices that underlie idealization processes in society led to the conclusion that “[t]he ‘subject’ is not something given, it is something added and inverted and projected behind what there is” (*Will*, 267). Hence, “the self, which had been raised to transcendental then cosmic status, has now disintegrated into nothingness” (Solomon, 126). It is true, however, that the recognition of the importance of desire does not imply liberation of erotic desire for Nietzsche. In fact, the most important aspect of Nietzsche’s philosophy in relation to the discourses of desire is his declamations against the subject, against

what he calls the slave morality and Christianity; against anything that had been idealized thus far which initiated a current that would lead to the dispossession of centuries old ideals from their status of the *Thing*, in Lacanian terms.

One major challenge to the concept of the self as the knowing agent came at the turn of the century, from Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), who directed his attention to the self with the intention of analyzing human behavior, which was by no means a novel enterprise. However, his discovery of the unconscious overturned every established conception of the self, of the human as the rational creature that can know himself[44]. The presence of an unconscious implied that the mind could be a stranger to itself, that there could be motivations underlying human actions the doer of which may not be aware of. This possibility undermines the claim for agency in human actions. Furthermore, Freud defined the unconscious as the storehouse of repressed uncivilized and destructive desires which do not comply with the idea of the human as a superior being.

Another unsettling aspect of Freud's psychoanalytical theory was his elaboration of the meaning of the concept of "the sexual" so as to include anything that gives pleasure to a person together with his inclusion of the mouth and anus in addition to the genitalia in his definition of erogenous zones. His indication of sexual traumas of childhood as the cause of later psychic disorders provoked harsh criticism not only because it attributed sexual feelings to children but also because the assumption gave quite a privileged position to sexual instincts in the constitution of personality. According to Freud, sexual instincts that manifest themselves initially in autoeroticism and are later directed to external objects of desire, play a decisive role in the choice of the object of love. As it has already been explained in the

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[44] Lacan calls the misconception of the subject as an autonomous being *méconnaissance*.

introduction to Part I, the type of love relationship the child internalizes during infancy has a determining role on the formation of character and engagement of the person with other people and external world:

> Psychoanalysis has shown us that when the original object of wishful impulses has been lost as a result of repression, it is frequently represented by an endless series of substitute objects none of which, however, bring full satisfaction. This may explain the inconstancy in object-choice, "the craving for stimulation" which is so often a feature of the love of adults. ("Debasement", 91)

Hence, with Freud love comes to occupy a central position in human life.

Later, Lacan was to explain the new status love acquired with psychoanalysis in the following words:

> Analysis has brought a very important change of perspective on love by placing it at the center of ethical experience; it has also brought an original note, which was certainly different from the way in which love had previously been viewed by the *moralistes* and the philosophers in the economy interhuman relationships (Lacan, *Ethics*, 8-9)

Similarly, Kristeva also indicates how it is the notion of love redefined by Freud that transformed the meaning of soul (psyche in Greek):

> With Freud love relationship has been transformed into a psychic functioning and "psyche is no longer that winged Platonic soul drawn toward the supralunar world, nor is it simply the contemplative soul that has haunted western asceticism at least since Plotinus (Kristeva *Love* , 14)

Thus, Freud attributed a key role to sexuality, desire and love in the constitution of the self as a subject. Furthermore, he asserted the ignorance of the mind to its own workings, the unconscious motivations that underlie what one considers his/her most rational decisions and acts. In doing so, he clearly undermined man's faith in his reason and his ability to know himself. Moreover, centuries old ideals of humanity, such as ethics, religion and arts came to be viewed from the point of view of psychic

mechanisms and considered to be consequences of idealization, sublimation, repression and/or projection processes.

The emergence of psychoanalysis marks the beginning of a period after which the discourses of desire come to be dominated by a type of discourse that is not solely philosophical. Freud's theories were taken up by Lacan (1901-81), who is an important figure in the development of psychoanalysis, but more significant perhaps, for his tremendous effect on the subsequent intellectual life, not only on psychoanalysis but also on other branches of the social sciences. His theory involves a reinterpretation of Freudian psychoanalytical theory within the framework of the poststructuralist approach to language.

Lacan redefines the process of Freudian formation of the ego, retaining most of the stages Freud described but using a totally different terminology and attributing them new significations. He associates the constitution of the individuals as subjects with language, the learning of which marks the beginning of their socialization process. His reinterpretation of Freud's notion of the "castration complex" within his poststructuralist frame of language leads to his assertion of *phallus*[45] as the privileged master signifier. He denotes phallus as the master-signifier since the individuals situate themselves within the discourse(s) they are born into in strict relation to their sexual identity: "For the phallus is the signifier… For it is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier" (*Ecrits*, 316). Lacan further

[45] For Lacan phallus is not equivalent to penis, but rather it is a signifier with certain significations attached to it in the symbolic order, such as potency and autonomy. Because phallus does not necessarily mean penis, it is possible to talk about women with phallic function or men without it: "… relation of the phallus … is established without regard to the anatomical difference of the sexes" (*Ecrits*, 312). That is the reason he refers to the misrecognized omnipotent mother in the imaginary stage as the "phallic mother". Having or lacking the phallus signifies the difference between the sexes and their positions in the symbolic order. The comportment of other people toward the subject relies on their recognition of the individual as man, woman or other. This, I would argue, is a description rather than a prescription on Lacan's part.

explains that the subjects' comportment in life relies on this positioning according to their possessing or lacking the phallus, because not only the subjects' treatment of themselves but also the other people's treatment of them differs according to the realization of the subject as a certain sexed being; a woman, a man or other. Lacan explains that one's identity is founded on the primary desire to satisfy the mother's desire. The mother's unconscious desire is for nothing other than having the phallus. Therefore, both the son and the daughter try to fulfill her desire by being the phallus, i.e. embodying the implications phallus has for the mother. This has serious implications for the constitution of the self as a sexed being for the individual - though differently for each sex:

> If the desire of the mother is the phallus, the child wishes to be the phallus in order to satisfy that desire. … it is in order to be the phallus, that is to say, the signifier of the desire of the Other, that a woman will reject an essential part of femininity, namely, all her attributes in the masquerade. It is for that which she is not that she wishes to be desired as well as loved. But she finds the signifier of her own desire in the body of him to whom she addresses her demand for love. … the man finds satisfaction for his demand for love in the relation with the woman, in as much as the signifier of the phallus constitutes her as giving in love what she does not have – conversely, his own desire for the phallus will make its signifier emerge in its persistent divergence towards "another woman" who may signify this phallus in various ways, either as a virgin or as a prostitute. (*Ecrits*, 320-321)

Thus, Lacan ascribes to women the fate of being trapped in a masquerade, a constant endeavor of posing as the phallus, something they cannot be, in order to become the object of desire for men – which is of course at the unconscious level a displacement for the desire to be object of desire of the mother. It is through this masquerade and thereby becoming the object of desire for men that women can have access to phallus. On the other hand, men are destined to seek the phallus in their relation with women, which is bound to fail for it is impossible to satisfy the forever elusive desire. Therefore, he keeps changing one signifier of the phallus for the next, not

recognizing that it is a constant postponement of the realization of his unconscious desire.

In addition to continuing the Freudian displacement of the self from the position of the noble, ethical and knowing subject, Lacan's theories had disconcerting implications for two important groups of theoreticians. In one group, there are Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Lacan's younger contemporaries, who question Freudian psychoanalytical theory in general, and Lacan's approach in particular. They criticize both for basing their theories on the concept of a constitutive lack and an essential repression at the foundation of both the subject and the society. In the other group are French feminist psychoanalysts like Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray, who opposed Lacan's attribution of a central position to the concept of phallus as the master signifier, which they call *phallogocentrism*, and his denying female identity any genuineness by describing it as essentially a masquerade.

Philosophers Gilles Deleuze (1925-95) and Félix Guattari[46] (1930-92) - also a psychotherapist - collaborated in writing many important books including *Anti-Oedipus*, *A Thousand Plateaus* and *What is Philosophy?*. They see psychoanalysis as one of the tools of the social regime that channel and control desire, thereby suppressing its revolutionary potential. In *Anti-Oedipus* they argue that Freud's explanation of the mechanism for the formation of the individual in relation to the Oedipus Complex and Lacan's overemphasis on the importance of the lack at the center of subjectivity and desire serve the capitalist intention of producing demand for continuous consumption. One of their main objections to psychoanalysis stems from their conception of psychoanalysis as a process through which individuals

[46] He was psychoanalyzed by Jacques Lacan.

delegate their desire to an "authority", the analyst, whose discourse, so they claim, involves restructuring the manifestations of the unconscious desires of the analysand with a repressive attitude. In response, Deleuze and Guattari want to redeem these self from these repressive discourses, and they promulgate the idea of a constant process of becoming and transformation, becoming "desiring nomads" in their words. Instead of the lack that constitutes desire, they emphasize the excessive potential of desire to multiply and establish continuous relations between people and things. Hence, instead of psychoanalysis which is limiting, they propose schizoanalysis, which liberates by way of deconstructing dominant discourses.

Deleuze and Guattari do not treat desire as solely a psychological phenomenon but undertake a political analysis, a *micropolitics* of desire. They conceive of desire as "fundamentally positive and productive," something that should not be repressed but allowed to "run in discontinuous fluxes" to establish "random, fragmented, multiple connections with material flows and partial objects" (Best and Kellner, 81). They also emphasize the liberation of desire in order to constitute a non-hierarchical pluralist society, one which extends horizontally like a rhizome.

While Deleuze and Guattari concern themselves with the revolutionary potential of desire by situating themselves in opposition to Freud and Lacan, Helen Cixous and Luce Irigaray do so by taking female desire as their focus. Helen Cixous (1937), a leading French feminist critic, a prolific writer, poet and playwright, rejects Freud's theory of the Oedipus and Electra complexes for the role he assigned to women and the too much emphasis he gives to the possession of a male organ in the constitution of identity. Likewise, she criticizes Lacan for his *phallogocentrism* and argues that the patriarchal language does not leave room for the female subject to express herself. Cixous, therefore, emphasizes the necessity of freeing oneself from

the grip of the male language by overturning the rules of the language. She also subverts the thousand years of suppression of the body and Lacanian *phallogocentrism* with the preeminence she gives to the female body. In *The Laugh of Medusa*, she emphasizes the necessity of writing the female self and "writing from the body". What she calls "writing from the body" entails disrupting the rules of syntax and logic, subverting the linear structure of language, abandoning teleological storytelling and realistic representation, thereby liberating the self from discourse as it is possible via *jouissance* – a feeling that carries one beyond the language and the self through a bodily experience. She wants the superego to be overthrown by the wildness of the unconscious, or the symbolic by the imaginary in Lacanian terms. Her idiosyncratic manner of writing based on these premises opened the way for a new feminine expression commonly called *écriture féminine*. Cixous' theory also propagated bisexuality and polymorphous perversity as the means to overthrow female domination by men.

Luce Irigaray[47] (1930), French psychoanalyst and critic, shares with Cixous her ideas about *phallogocentrism* and *écriture féminine*. She deconstructs the male psychoanalytical discourse to point out the inherent biases and analyzes the neglected mother-daughter relationship. One of her main aims is to identify and underline uniquely feminine characteristics which have been delegated to an inferior position in the binary constructions of the patriarchal discourse. In "This Sex Which is Not One", Irigaray emphasizes touch and smell in place of the male gaze, multiplicity intrinsic to female sexuality instead of masculine singularity and plurality of the female sex organ as opposed to its definition as lack by the dominant discourses for ages.

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[47] She attended Lacan's seminars and was a member of École Freudienne de Paris, directed by Lacan.

A less protest figure and a more faithful Lacanian, Julia Kristeva (1941) is another important psychoanalyst among the French feminist critics. She agrees with Cixous and Irigaray about the oppressiveness of the male language through which women cannot define and express themselves. Therefore, she also privileges the pre-symbolic state, the stage that is characterized by the presence of the mother only: that stage before language, where the infant has relation only with the mother is for Kristeva the only feminine space. She calls this *semiotic chora*. Unlike Cixous and Irigaray, however, she does not pursue features that are unique to woman, but rather the feminine features that are found in the constitution of every human. She aims to deconstruct monolithic discourses, demystify its privileged concepts and disrupt its solidity with female fluidity, especially through art:

> role of what is usually called 'aesthetic practices' must increase. . . to demystify the identity of the symbolic bond, to demystify, therefore, the community of language as a universal and unifying tool. . .in order to bring out – along with the singularity of each person and, even more, the multiplicity of every person's possible identifications. . .the relativity of his/her symbolic as well as biological existence, according to the variation in his/her specific symbolic capabilities. And in order to emphasize the responsibility which all will immediately face of putting this fluidity into play. . . (*Reader*, 210).

Because she does not limit her analysis to women only, she pursues *semiotic chora* in male writers like James Joyce and maintains a critical distance to the feminist movements of mid-century France, she is referred to somewhat negatively as the "dutiful daughter of patriarchy" by Elizabeth Grosz (150) and on a more positive tone, as a "critical fellow-traveler" by Toril Moi (9). In any case, her contribution to the feminist deconstructive theory with a structuralist and psychoanalytical approach is indisputable.

Nietzsche can be said to have initiated a process of displacement of the self from its autonomous status as a knowing subject and deconstruction of the

philosophical discourses to reveal their contingency as well as their implicit relation to the personal prejudices and motivations of the thinkers. This epistemic rupture led to the dissolution of the hierarchical binaries inherent in the thitherto dominant discourses and the desublimation of the ideals proposed in them for thousands of years. Psychoanalysis, with its objective of revealing the underlying mechanisms of human behavior and emotions, took as its object what had been denied a frank confrontation for centuries – excluding the medical studies conducted on sexuality: human desire, more importantly erotic desire and sexuality. Desire in general, an erotic desire in particular, is liberated from the repression it had been subjected to and gradually attained a central position in the ascending new type of discourse open to plurality rather than reliance of one absolute ideal universal for all. Thereby, the age-old submission of eroticism by reason came to a halt.

What is ironic, on the other hand, is that, the relation being reversed, reason, as well as the Law and order it entailed, came to be subjected to a desublimation then. Mikhail Epsteins' assertion stated in a different context applies very well to what has happened to desire in discourse: "Revolutionary negation proves to be an aggrandizement, a hyperbole of what is negated. Antithesis circles back on thesis, as its disguised and exaggerated projection" (parag.74). That is, once an idea is negated radically, what it is replaced by becomes too much reliant on the terms of negation and therefore cannot relieve itself from its influence. Moreover, it attains the status of what it negates and perhaps a higher status by being its exaggerated opposite. Likewise, while reason is displaced from its position as the Thing in philosophical theories, with approaches like the schizoanalysis of Deleuze and Guattari, and feminist approaches of Cixous and Irigaray, desire and *jouissance* have become the new *Thing* in these discourses, respectively. Both groups of post-structuralist critics

have, therefore, been criticized for essentializing yet other concepts in the act of deconstructing, a contradiction in terms. In this respect, psychoanalysis with its disinterestedness in making moral or ideal statements and with its being a descriptive rather than a prescriptive tool – although some may argue for the opposite – has a more neutral stance.

As Lacan said, the possibility of transgression is created by the Law. Once something loses its status as the Thing, it no longer incites desire for its transgression. Hence, when erotic desire is liberated from its captivity in the outside of language and discourse, it ceases to become an object of transgression and becomes a tool of elaborating the discourse for the writers. This is not to suggest that their relations have never been controversial. However, despite what disagreements there may be, after the mid-nineteenth century, the narratives of erotic desire have never been as confrontational as they had been earlier and mostly elaborated on the prevalent philosophical and psychoanalytical discourse of desire of the time, even when the writers claimed the opposite, as in the case of D.H. Lawrence. It needs to be noted, on the other hand, that although since the beginning of the twentieth century there have been discourses of desire *per se*, instead of discourses which implicitly connote a discourse about desire, these by no means have replaced the previous discourses completely or become directly relevant to social life in general. Therefore, while elaborating on the discourses of desire, narratives of erotic desire have retained their transgressive import up to a certain extent and managed to escape censorship only in the final quarter of the century.

CHAPTER VII

DESIRE LIBERATED: READING LAWRENCE'S *LADY CHATTERLEY'S LOVER* THROUGH PSYCHOANALYSIS

At the turn of the nineteenth century, with the advent of psychoanalysis, discourses of desire were redeemed from the position of being a by-product of a discourse that sublimates an ideal. Thenceforth, desire, particularly erotic desire, became the central focus of discourses that were to have their impact n almost social science and arts . On the other hand, constituting the psychoanalytical discourse itself, creating a theory of psychology was not an easy task, especially when the theory involved deductions about the constitution of the self that people were not ready to hear, much less accept. Moreover, the theory was difficult to prove, since it relied not on empirical evidence, but on the speech of the analysand: it was a "talking cure" as one of Freud's patients, Anna O., called it. Data retrieved from the analysis of people, mainly women, who were suffering from a mental disorder, was not that "reliable" a source for many.

Freud was confronted with harsh criticism as he proposed his theories because psychoanalysis challenged the centuries-old confidence of the human capacity to know oneself and one's world, and placed at the center of the constitution of the subject sex drives, the very aspect of human existence that had always been repressed and denied. Moreover, Freud's theories involved statements about desires that were impossible to reconcile with the bourgeois family ethics; that children too have sexual feelings, and that they desire their parents sexually in early childhood.

During the time it was being developed and afterwards, psychoanalytical theory has been far from being a consistent whole, having undergone various modifications by Freud himself during his life time and being elaborated with diverse approaches over time. Freud's critics sought inconsistencies to discredit his theory, pulled out certain statements out of their context and/or misinterpreted his meanings. Although one may argue against certain of its premises and point out its deficiencies, psychoanalytical theory, with the original and deep insight it brought to the human psyche, has undoubtedly retained its force and influence ever since.

Freudian psychoanalysis revolves around the central concept of the "unconscious". Freud realized that it was not easy for people accustomed to thinking in a certain manner to acknowledge such ignorance of the self as the notion implies. In "Ego and the Id" he writes: "To most people who have been educated in philosophy the idea of anything psychical which is not also conscious is so inconceivable that it seems to them absurd and refutable simply by logic" (13). However, Freud argues, phenomena like dreams and hypnosis indicate that there are thoughts that are not always immediately present to consciousness, but which are stored in the unconscious unknown to the subject. He distinguishes between two types of unconscious: the unconscious proper, which consists of latent ideas that are not capable of becoming conscious, and the preconscious, which is dynamic and capable of becoming conscious. The reason certain latent ideas cannot become conscious is that they are repressed, and there is a certain "resistance" working against their becoming conscious[48]. It is upon his notions of the conscious and the unconscious that Freud builds his theory of the ego and the id.

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[48] Freud also explains that, in analysis, when the analysand comes closer to the repressed unconscious idea, the associations fail as a result of the resistance against its becoming conscious and, although the analysand feels some unpleasurable feelings arising due to the closeness to the unconscious repressed

In "The Dissection of the Psychical Personality", Freud conceives of a tripartite structure of the human psyche: the id, the ego and the super-ego. For him, the id is that aspect of the psyche which is not governed by the rules of logic or rational thinking and consists of what may be called uncivilized urges:

> [The id is] . . . a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations. We picture it as being open at its end to somatic influences, and as there taking up into itself instinctual needs which find their psychical expression in it, but we cannot say in what substratum this contact is made. These instincts fill it what substratum. It is filled with energy reaching it from the instinct, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring about the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure-principle. The logical laws of though do not apply in the id, and this is true above all of the law of contradiction. Contrary impulses exist side by side, without canceling each other out or diminishing each other: at most they may converge to form compromises under the dominating economic pressure towards the discharge of energy. There is nothing in the id that could be compared with negation; and we perceive with surprise an exception to the philosophical theorem that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. There is nothing in the id that corresponds to the idea of time; there is no recognition of the passage of time, and – a thing that is most remarkable and awaits consideration in philosophical thought – no alteration in its mental process is produced by the passage of time. … the id of course knows no judgments of value: no good and evil, no morality.[49] (73-74)

Hence, the presence of id implies a mechanism in the human psyche that works in opposition to the sublimated ideal of reason of the philosophers. The ego, on the other hand, is conceived of as the extension of the id, acting as a mediator between the external world and the id, as well as the superego and the id. Freud explains that without the ego, the id, with its persistent desire to gratify its instincts, runs the risk of annihilation in its confrontation with the external world. The main goals of the ego are to represent the external world to the id, sometimes dishonestly to eliminate conflict, and to try to fulfill the id's desires to the best of its capacity. Meanwhile, the

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idea, s/he lacks the words to describe it (17). This implies that, as with the Lacanian imaginary, Freud denotes the unconscious to be resistant to language and constituted outside it.

[49] The description of the id as basically unbound by social norms and not governed by the rules of reason and logic constitutes the basis of the Lacanian conception of the imaginary.

superego, the representative of the social norms – in other words, the symbolic – monitors and punishes the ego in cases of disobedience against the norms it upholds by inciting senses of inferiority or guilt. The ego's main responsibility becomes that of constituting a balance between the "whimsical" id and the "authoritarian" superego without causing any feelings of crisis for the self:

> Thus the ego, driven by the id, confined by the super-ego, and repulsed by reality, struggles to master its economic task of bringing about harmony among the forces and influences working in and upon it; and we can understand how it is that so often we cannot suppress the cry: "Life is not easy!" If the ego is obliged to admit its weakness, it breaks out in anxiety – realistic anxiety regarding the external world, moral anxiety regarding the super- ego and neurotic anxiety regarding the strength of the passions in the id. (78)

Freud also adds that such a division of the human psyche does not imply that there are clear-cut dividing lines to separate each component from the other. He proposes that there are actually gradual transitions between each pair, and that the distribution of their functions may change from person to person, and drastically so in cases of mental disorder.

Contrary to the general belief about Freudian psychoanalysis, Freud is neither a moralist nor a prescriptive author, which would necessitate supporting absolute adherence to the dictate of the superego. On the contrary, in the relations between the id, the ego and the superego, he stands closer to the id, that pre-social realm of pure desire[50]:

> Nevertheless, it may be admitted that the therapeutic efforts of psycho-analysis … is, indeed, to strengthen the ego, to make it more independent of the super-ego, to widen its field of perception and enlarge its organization,

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[50] Freud does not conceive desire as constituted in and through language, as Lacan does. For Lacan, the function of desire "is a last residuum of the effect of the signifier in the subject" (Fundamentals, 154); that is, desire is a by-product of the individual's immersion into language due to its being occasioned with the subject's entry into language, and the trace of the unconscious in the symbolic.

> so that it can appropriate fresh portions of the id. Where id was, there ego shall be.[51] (80)

Ego does not exist as a unity in the individual from the start, as Freud states in "On Narcissism: An Introduction", but both ego and the superego develop gradually.

The ego and the superego are formed with the psychic maturation of the child. While ego starts to be formed as a consequence of the intervention of the external world as soon as the infant begins to interact with it, the superego is constituted through the Oedipus complex. In addition to its role of being a mediator, the ego is the storehouse of libido[52] which it invests – in other words cathects – on external objects, such as the other people and sometimes itself. Freud has an economic view of libido; he presumes that the ego has a certain amount of libido to cathect on objects, and it has to keep it in balance not to devoid the ego totally of its libido. While falling in love involves libido cathexis on the beloved – which requires that the self be loved, otherwise the ego will be depleted of its libido and hence self-esteem – falling ill implies the retrieval of the libido to the self. As explained earlier, mourning is also a period of de-cathecting the libido from the lost object. Freud explains human relations and the individual's reactions in interpersonal relations within this economic framework of libido theory.

The Oedipus complex, by which the superego is formed, is one of the most controversial issues of Freudian psychoanalysis. Until the infant is mature enough to realize the presence of other individuals, it enjoys a dyadic relationship with the mother. In this pre-Oedipal phase, unable to recognize the boundaries of its

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[51] Lacan, on the other hand, argues that the objective of psychoanalysis is not strengthening the ego, which would be more appropriate to therapy. Psychoanalysis is simply the analysis of the unconscious which lies under the constitution of the ego.

[52] For Freud, libido is psychic energy of fixed amount. Lacan adds that "The libido is the effective presence, as such, of desire" (*Fundamentals*, 153). Hence, libido can be understood as a force that orients the individual to a certain external object through desire.

body, the infant perceives itself as polymorphous and the nurturing mother as an extension of its own body. The realization of the mother as a distinct being from itself causes separation anxiety in the infant. Moreover, with the entry of other people into the picture, mostly the father, the previously uninterrupted relation of the mother-infant dyad is spoiled. The infant begins to realize that it cannot have unlimited access to the mother, the control and occasional prohibition of which is symbolized in the figure of the father.[53] The separation anxiety is then coupled with feelings of rivalry towards the father, with whom the infant has to compete for the possession and love of the mother. Hence, it develops fantasies of killing the father to possess the mother. However, realizing that the mother lacks a penis, the infant assumes the father to be the cause of her castration and recognizes the father to be the source of all authority. In fear of being castrated himself, the boy-child moves towards identification with the father and, at the resolution of the complex, he transfers his love for the mother to other women in adulthood. The same realization by the girl-child, on the other hand, results in a disappointment with the mother and feelings of hostility towards her ensue. Her love and attachment for the mother is de-cathected and invested onto the father, the symbol of authority who does not lack a penis, later to be displaced by other men in adulthood. The desire to have a penis herself is replaced initially by a desire to bear a child – in adolescence for the father, as a result of which she considers herself to be a rival of the mother for the love of the father – and/or to have access to the penis through sex.

Yet, Freud's explanation about the mechanism of the resolution of the complex in the girl-child is not found sufficient as its lacks the elaboration and the

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[53] The Freudian Oedipus Complex can be thought of as corresponding to Lacanian theory about the infant's entry into Symbolic Stage and the internalization of the symbolic father as the internalized Name-of-the-Father.

degree of persuasiveness, if it has any, of the mechanism for the boy-child. His conclusion is that, with the formation of the superego, stimulated by the authority the father represents, these desires are repressed into the unconscious, whether they are resolved with the required transformations or not. As he explains in "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex", the experience of the Oedipus complex forms the basis of all relations in adulthood, a sexual basis in a sense (176-9).

All in all, the human psyche evolves from the state of the id toward a tripartite structure as a result of the id's becoming overlaid by the ego and superego, and is very much determined by its infantile experience especially during the Oedipal period. The unconscious thus formed, manifests itself in dreams, jokes, lapses and slips, in an array of manifestations from insignificant psychopathologies of everyday life[54] to serious mental disorders. The individual's actions take place within the web of their interaction.

Initially, Freud presumed human unconscious to be oriented only toward a wish-fulfillment, which he called the pleasure-principle. This orientation was checked by the ego in accordance with the reality-principle. However, in his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud proposes the existence of an extraordinary instinct in the human psyche: a death instinct. He claims that all living beings desire a state of tranquility, unchanging stability, where there is no tension. He deduces that the ultimate end of this desire for a static state is death. Hence, in the human psyche, together with a life instinct, *eros*, is found a death instinct which stimulates the individual towards destruction, self-annihilation and/or non-existence. It manifests itself through acts like aggression and repetition. This argument for a death instinct

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[54] Lacan refers to such instances as the signs for the return of the Real. Although the Real is repressed into the unconscious with the commencement of the symbolic stage, it cannot be totally repressed, and the unconscious Real uses every opportunity to manifest itself from the little breaches in the symbolic order, as in dreams, jokes, slips of the tongue, etc.

was again a controversial claim, especially after centuries of philosophical thinking in which the tendency of living things toward self-preservation was oftentimes emphasized. Nevertheless, the idea also found support among later important critics like Bataille and Lacan.

The notion of the death instinct is later taken up by Lacan, who associated the drive for death with sex. As explained earlier, Lacan asserts that the subject's recognition of itself as a sexed being occurs simultaneously with its realization of its mortality. His statement, that "… the link between sex and death, sex and the death of the individual, is fundamental," (*Fundamentals*, 150) further emphasizes the importance of the relationship. Lacan explains that existence rests upon copulation thanks to sexual division, and he adds that other characteristics, more or less bound up with the finality of reproduction as well as the secondary sexual characters and functions, have always been grouped, harmonized around this fundamental reality (150). Since these characteristics and human exchanges are realized within "matrimonial alliances" and the "most elementary structures of social functioning" (that is, within the symbolic), Lacan concludes that it is "in this way that the signifier came into the world, into the world of man" (151). Thus, he establishes what he calls "an affinity between enigmas of sexuality and the play of the signifier" (151). This statement insinuates that almost every play of the signifier is related to an underlying sexual origin.

Psychoanalytical theory, with its so-called overemphasis on sexuality, not only provoked harsh criticism but also fascinated many people. After centuries of emphasis upon reason, the discovery of the unconscious as the realm of desire, chaos and the irrational became a source of attraction, especially for artists. Surrealists, for instance, borrowed considerably from Freud's theory of the unconscious, free

association and dream analysis method in the formation of their techniques.[55] Psychoanalysis also contributed to literature, especially the modernist fiction, not only by means of the "stream of consciousness" technique inspired by the Freudian technique of free association used in analysis, but also by the insight psychoanalysis brought into the examination of the individual's psyche.

D.H. Lawrence is one of the prominent writers of the early twentieth century who not only used his knowledge of psychoanalytical theory in his novels, but also developed his own psychoanalytical approach. He wrote two books on psychoanalysis: *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and, a shorter one, *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*. Evident from the titles of the books, what fascinated Lawrence most was the notion of the unconscious in psychoanalysis. Because he was deeply frustrated with modern life and the dominant discourses which promoted reason and mind over body and desire, especially erotic desire, psychoanalysis appealed to him enormously. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Lawrence expresses his dissatisfaction with the domination, or rather supression, of modern men by language, by intellectual activity, and by false idea(l)s:

> Once the mind is awake, being in itself a finality, it feels very assured. … Mentality, being automatic in its principle like the machine, begins to assume life. It begins to affect life, to pretend to make and unmake life. 'In the beginning was the Word.' This is the presumptuous masquerading of the mind. The Word cannot be the beginning of life. It is the end of life, that which falls shed. The mind is the dead end of life. But it has all the mechanical force of the non-vital universe. It is a great dynamo of super-mechanical force. … So we see the brain, like a great dynamo and accumulator, accumulating mechanical force and presuming to apply this mechanical force-control to the living unconscious, subjecting everything spontaneous to certain machine-principles called ideals or ideas. (247-8)

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[55] Despite the Surrealist claim of reflecting the unconscious, being created at the end of a process of planning and thought, Surrealist art can only represent the conscious of the artist.

Lawrence believes that language, by which idea(l)s are created and promulgated, suppresses the unconscious.

It is important to note here that, for Lawrence, the unconscious has quite a different meaning than it has in psychoanalysis[56]. For him, the unconscious means spontaneity, which he observes to be lacking in modern society. Synonymous with life, the unconscious is not an abstract notion but a physical entity:

> It is that active spontaneity which rouses in each individual organism at the moment of fusion of the parent nuclei, and which, in polarized connection with the external universe, gradually evolves or elaborates its own individual psyche and corpus, bringing both mind an body forth from itself. Thus it would seem that the term unconsciousness is only another word for life itself. But life is a general force, whereas the unconscious is essentially single and unique in each individual organism; it is the active, self-evolving soul bringing forth its own incarnation and self-manifestation. … the unconsciousness brings forth not only consciousness, but tissue and organs also. …
>
> But the unconsciousness is never an abstraction, *never to be abstracted* [sic]. It is never an ideal entity. It is always concrete. In the first instance, it is the glinting nucleus of the ovule. And proceeding from this, it is the chain or constellation of nuclei which drive directly from this first spark. And further still it is the great nerve-centers of the human body, in which the primal pristine nuclei still act direct. The nuclei are centers of spontaneous consciousness. (242)

Through such a convoluted argument, Lawrence ties the unconscious to the conscious and further associates it with sex due to the spontaneity and corporeality it involves.

As a reaction to the negligence of the body for centuries by philosophy and Christianity, Lawrence asserts a mode of existence and an experience of

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[56] Interestingly enough, Lawrence's conception of the unconscious relies on his desire about what he would like it to be and some random observations he makes rather than any in-depth analysis. He even points out a location in the body for the unconscious, relying on his knowledge of yogic philosophy: the solar plexus, one of the seven chakras. He argues that anyone who has held a baby will know where the center of life, the unconscious, is in the human body. For Lawrence, in order to know, it is sufficient to feel, and science will only prove what is already felt: "We feel it, as we feel hunger or love or hate. Once we know what we are, science can proceed to analyze our knowledge, demonstrate its truth or its untruth." (219)

interpersonal relationships closely associated with the body and involving sexual intimacy:

> Now our business is to realize sex. …After centuries of obfuscation, the mind demands to know and know fully. … The reason being that our ancestors have so assiduously acted sex without ever thinking it or realizing it, that now the act tends to be mechanical, dull and disappointing, and only fresh mental realization will freshen up the experience. The mind has to catch up, in sex: indeed, in all the physical acts. … In this one respect, we have left the mind unevolved. ("A Propos", 228)

Thus, Lawrence proposes a revolutionary alteration in the manner of thinking and living of modern people, which is more in compliance with the natural state of existence. He emphasizes that, in addition to one's natural needs, the self requires interaction with other people. As he says, "Man doth not live by bread alone. He lives even more essentially from the nourishing creative flow between himself and another or others." (*Unconscious*, 246). Moreover, aspects of existence are to be in harmony for a peaceful existence: "Life is bearable when the mind and the body are in harmony, and there is a natural balance between them, and each has a natural respect for the other" ("A Propos", 231).

Moreover, Lawrence indicates sexuality to be the means of achieving this balance, an idea he expresses in a most poetic language:

> Sex is the balance of male and female in the universe, the attraction, the repulsion, the transit of neutrality, the new attraction, the new repulsion, always different, always new. The long neuter spell of Lent, when the blood is low, ad the delight of the Easter kiss, the slow sexual revel of spring, the passion of midsummer, the slow recoil, revolt, and grief of autumn, greyness again, then the sharp stimulus of winter of the long nights. Sex goes through the rhythm of the year, in man and woman, ceaselessly changing: the rhythm of the sun in his relation to the earth. Oh, what a catastrophe for man when he cut himself off from the rhythm of the year, from his unison with the sun and earth. Oh, what a catastrophe, what a maiming of love when it was made personal, merely personal feeling, taken away from the rising and the setting of the sun, and cut off from the magic connection of the solstice and the equinox! ("A Propos", 251)

Thus Lawrence equates the unconscious with life, life with sex, and sex with nature. Moreover, for Lawrence,

> … one of the greater needs of man is a knowledge and experience of death; every man needs to know death in his own body. … the greatest need of man is the renewal forever of the complete rhythm of life and death, the rhythm of the sun's year, the body's year of a lifetime, and the greater year of the stars, the soul's year of immortality. (252)

Thus, Lawrence further adds the importance of the acknowledgement of one's mortality.

Although his interest in the unconscious and sex could suggest that Lawrence has awe for psychoanalysis, he expresses serious discontent with Freud's theories. The reason might be, as some argue, that he did not devote enough time and energy to reading Freud to be able to appreciate the true implications. The rhetorical question he asks in his essay "Sex and Loveliness" gives away his (mis)conception about psychoanalysis implicit in the statement: "What, for example, could show a more poisoned hatred of sex than Freudian psychoanalysis? – which carries with it a morbid fear of beauty, 'alive' beauty, and which causes the atrophy of our intuitive faculty and our intuitive self" (122). Ironically, however, his conception of sexuality, not only as a life force, but also as a web of signifiers through which the individual manifests its ego ideal, and the relations he observes between sex, life and death – except for his "fantasy" definition of unconscious – bear strong affinities with Freudian psychoanalysis and also anticipate Lacan's theories.

In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Lawrence' last novel, written after a life time of thinking, writing and living in accordance with his theories, Lawrence both creates an epitome of his ideas and, wittingly or unwittingly, elaborates on the psychoanalytical theories much in fashion at the time the novel was written, between 1925 and 1928. His intention of representing his ideas through his novel obviously

necessitated the foregrounding of the body and the emphasizing of the beauty of sexual intercourse, as well as the profound meaning of making love. However, after the prosecution and withdrawal of *The Rainbow* from circulation, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* due to its explicit depictions of sexual scenes and obscene language was censured and could not be published in an unexpurgated edition in England until 1959 (Kermode and Hollander, 449). Lawrence had to have his novel printed by a not very professional publisher, at a little Italian printing shop in Florence, at the expense of many spelling mistakes since the people at the shop did not know a word of English. He tells the story of the publication of the novel with a humorous tone:

> … there are many spelling errors … because the book was set up in a little Italian printing shop, such a family affair, in which nobody knew one word of English. … The printer would do fairly well for a few pages, then he would go drunk, or something. And then the words danced weird and macabre, but not English. So that if still some of the hosts of errors exist, it is a mercy they are not more.
>
> Then one paper wrote pitying the poor printer who was deceived into printing the book. Not deceived at all. … he was told: Now the book contains such-and-such words, in English, and it describes certain things. Don't you print it if you think it will get you into trouble! – "What does it describe?" he asked. And when told, he said, with the short indifference of a Florentine: "*O! ma!* but we do it every day!" – [sic] And it seemed, to him, to settle the matter entirely. Since it was nothing political or out of the way, there was nothing to think about. Everyday concerns, commonplace. ("A Propos", 268)

The printer seems to have perceived the essence of the matter without having to be told unlike those who Lawrence calls "censor-morons".

Significantly, Lawrence does not believe *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to be a pornographic novel. He explains in his essay "Pornography and Obscenity" that the general description of pornography as material produced to arouse sexual feeling does not convey the truth of the situation because there is essentially nothing wrong about being sexually aroused, which is a natural aspect of being a human (200). He asserts that it is not the depiction of the sexual act itself but the perception that

denotes it as dirty, as something to be kept secret, which is pornographic. As he writes, “Pornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it” (203), adding that, “The whole question of pornography seems to me a question of secrecy. Without secrecy there would be no pornography” (206).

There was so much consternation about the book that Lawrence felt obliged to explain the philosophy underlying the novel and defend his reasons for writing it in an essay, “A Propos of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*”. In this essay, in addition to explicating his philosophy of living mentioned above, he states his motivation in writing the novel to be to encourage thinking about sex differently from the way it is predetermined by the modern society and subverting the meanings attributed to the so-called “four-letter” words in language in order to make them acquire new connotations:

> ... And this is the real point of this book. I want men and women to be able to think sex, fully, completely, honestly and cleanly. … to use the so-called obscene words, because these are a natural part of the mind’s consciousness of the body. Obscenity only comes in when the mind despises and fears the body, and the body hates and resists the mind. (“A Propos” 227-9)

Lawrence also wrote a poem in which he mocked people who were offended by the book, including his friends, and sarcastically pretended to repent his obscene language:

My Naughty Book

They say I wrote a naughty book
With perfectly awful things in it,
putting in all the impossible words
like b___ and f___ and sh__.

Most of my friends were deeply hurt
and haven't forgiven me yet;
I'd loaded the camel's back before
with dirt they couldn't forget.

And now, no really, the final straw
was words like sh__and f__!
I heard the camel's back to crack
beneath the weight of muck.

Then out of nowhere rushed John Bull,
that mildewed pup, good doggie!
squeakily bellowing for all he was worth,
and slavering wet and soggy.

He couldn't bite ‘em he was much too old,
but he made a pool of dribblings;
so while the other one heaved her sides
with moans and hollow bibblings.

He did his best, the good old dog
to support her, the hysterical camel,
and everyone listened and loved it, the
ridiculous bimmel-bammel.

But still, one has no right to take
the old dog's greenest bones
that he's buried now for centuries
beneath England’s garden stones.

And, of course, one has no right to lay
such words to the camel's charge,
when she prefers to have them left
in the W.C. writ large.

Poor homely words. I must give you back
to the camel and the dog,
for her to mumble and him to crack
in secret, great golliwog!

And hereby I apologise
to all my foes and friends
for using words they privately keep
for their own immortal ends.

And henceforth I will never use
more than the chaste, short dash;
so do forgive me! I sprinkle my hair
with grey, repentant ash.

Lawrence also finds the claim that he wrote the novel only to shock people meaningless to say the least. After stating that it is only to be expected that a novel written in defiance of convention be attributed an attitude of defiance, he adds that

the silly desire to bewilder the commonplace person "is not worth entertaining" (267). His endeavor to divest the "four-letter" words from the connotative baggage they are invested with in language, as well as his daring to narrate a story that was to be found scandalous and in no way to be appreciated for its true implications, may be interpreted as an attempt at modifying the symbolic order, to alter the mental organization of people, in order to change their perspective on a subject he finds of utmost importance. He realized that unless the symbolic order one is constituted in is altered, there can be no possibility of changing the mentality of people.

It was not merely the "obscene" language and sexual depictions of the novel that were found outrageous. The adulterous relationship between a lady and a gamekeeper that constituted the central axis of the novel was also found offensive given the violation of class distinction it involved. The novel's female protagonist, Constance Chatterley (Connie) is the wife of Sir Clifford Chatterley, a member of an aristocratic family. Soon after Connie and Clifford get married, Clifford is injured in the war, and the lower part of his body is left paralyzed. He and Connie live in the bleak mansion that belongs to Clifford's family, Wragby Hall, and they are occasionally entertained by the company of friends. Cliff directs all his energy to writing, and Connie tries to support him in his work and by being the devoted wife that she is. However, her life energy is gradually drained, hazarding her health. Following her father's advice, she has an affair with a playwright, Michaelis, which ends in disappointment. In her occasional walks in the wood, she becomes acquainted with the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors. Over time, their initially tense encounters turn into passionate love making. Because Clifford cannot have children but would like to have an heir for Wragby, he allows Connie to become pregnant by another man and agrees to bring the child up as his own. They believe that they can

create the impression that it is actually Clifford's child. Thus, Connie gets pregnant by Mellors but does not reveal it to Clifford at first; she goes to Venice to make Clifford believe that she had an affair there. While she is away, Mellors' wife, Bertha returns home after years of living apart and insists on living with Mellors. Unable to bear his wife, Mellors refuses to live with her and leaves his house. Bertha discovers his relation with Connie and spreads the gossip in town, much to Clifford's frustration. Clifford dismisses Mellors, and Connie's plans for returning to Wragby and preparing Clifford for the idea of divorce gradually instead of leaving him abruptly are spoilt. Her initial attempts at making Clifford believe that she has fallen in love with a man whose baby she is carrying fail, and she has to admit the fact that she had been involved in a relationship with Mellors before she went to Venice. Clifford refuses to divorce her, and Mellors, in order to secure his divorce from Bertha, has to stay away from Connie for a while. The novel ends on an optimistic note, however, with Mellors' letter to Connie written in expectation of their coming together, hopefully in the near future.

The majority of the action of the novel takes place in Wragby Hall, in the poor industrial town of Tevershall close to the mansion, and in the wood that surrounds the mansion. These three sites become the symbolic representations of the three different groups of people that Lawrence's philosophy of life and sex relate to. Wragby itself represents the modern dominant wealthy class, who are both the victimizers and the victimized: they are victimized in their worship of intellect, money and power, and they themselves victimize the lower classes, represented by Tevershall, through not only their discourse but also their imposition of industrial labor on them. Tevershall represents the people who waste their lives away without any consciousness of its meaning and in the trivia of everyday life. The wood, on the

other hand, is the place where Lawrence's ideals of experiencing spontaneity and uniting with life and nature via sex can be realized. Julian Moynahan, a Lawrence scholar, defines Lawrence's observation about people's lives symbolized by Wragby and Tevershall, on the one hand, and the wood, on the other hand, as "two ways of knowing" (76). The kind of people represented by Wragby and Tevershall are deluded about the right way of living and they are either enslaved by their intellects or by modern industrial life. Those represented by the wood, on the other hand, know the value of spontaneity, life and sex, and the importance of their bodies as well as their minds and souls.

Both the major and minor characters of the novel can be analyzed in relation to their association with any one of these sites. Evidently, Clifford Chatterley belongs to the Wragby Hall type of people. He relies simply on his intellect in his life and does not once allow himself or Connie the liberty to act in spontaneity. Many critics tended to interpret his paralysis as a symbol of his inability to live truly. Lawrence himself was frequently asked whether he intended Clifford's paralysis to serve as a symbol of the modern man's inability to feel. He answers that, when he created both Clifford and Connie, he had no idea "what they were or why they were" ("A Propos", 266). He adds that only after the novel was written three times did he recognize that "the lameness of Clifford was symbolic of the paralysis, the deeper emotional or passional paralysis, of most men of his sort and class" (266).

From the outset, the marriage of Connie and Clifford is presented as being based on false premises according to Lawrencian thinking:

> … He had been virgin when he married: and the sex part did not mean much to him. They were so close, he and she, apart from that. And Connie exulted a little in this intimacy which was beyond sex, and beyond a man's 'satisfaction'. Clifford anyhow was not just keen on his 'satisfaction', as so many men seemed to be. No, the intimacy was deeper, more personal than

> that. And sex was merely an accident, or an adjunct, one of the curious obsolete, organic processes which persisted in its own clumsiness, but was not really necessary. (13)

Thus, instead of relying on the harmony of both body and mind, their relationship is only cerebral, more like a friendship than the relationship of a husband and wife

Clifford's is a one-sided existence, for the sustenance of which he has to rely on others. However, his ego is so vulnerable because of his disability that he cannot confront the reality of his dependence on other people and does his best to create the illusion of authority to prevent the others from disdaining or leaving him. To render his "imprisonment" in Wragby bearable, he invests his entire libido into his writing activity, through which he tries to constitute his self-esteem. His relation to Connie, partially because it does not involve sex, and partially because it is based on intellect rather than emotions, cannot provide the satisfaction one finds in a love relationship. Connie is important to him, not because he truly loves her, but because she is part of his definition of identity and also, with the support she gives him, a guarantee of the continuation of his only libidinal activity of writing. She is like a mother substitute for him. Not being a motherly character, Connie neither wants to plays the role of the mother substitute, nor can she even if she wanted to. Nevertheless, Clifford is so dependent on her that he experiences separation anxiety each time an occasion for Connie to leave him temporarily arises. His separation anxiety is almost completely relieved when he manages to replace Connie with Mrs. Bolton, the nurse employed after Connie's health deteriorates. The motherly figure that she is, and inferior in rank to Sir Clifford, Mrs. Bolton institutes a more satisfying relationship with Clifford.

When finally Connie leaves Clifford to give birth to her child and with the expectation of starting to live with Mellors soon, Clifford not only withdraws all his

libidinal investment from Connie, but also regresses into a state of childhood. It is as if it were the presence of Connie and his so-called role as the husband in relation to her, with the symbolic implications it has for him and the society, that were keeping his immature self from retreating into total childhood. With Connie no longer present, he allows himself to act like a child and treat Mrs. Bolton as his mother without the least intention of concealing it from his superego, befitting a child's attitude:

> … Clifford became like a child with Mrs Bolton. He would hold her hand, and rest his head on her breast, and when she once lightly kissed him, he said! 'Yes! Do kiss me! Do kiss me!' And when she sponged his great blond body, he would say the same! 'Do kiss me!' and she would lightly kiss his body, anywhere, half in mockery.
>
> And he lay with a queer, blank face like a child, with a bit of the wonderment of a child. And he would gaze on her with wide, childish eyes, in a relaxation of Madonna-worship. It was sheer relaxation on his part, letting go all his manhood, and sinking back to a childish position that were really perverse. And then he would put his hand into his bosom and feel her breasts, and kiss them in exaltation, the exaltation of perversity, of being a child when he was a man.
>
> … And they drew into a closer physical intimacy, an intimacy of perversity, when he was a child stricken with an apparent candour and an apparent wonderment, that looked almost like a religious exaltation: the perverse and literal renderings of: 'except ye become again as a little child'. – While she was the Magna Mater, full of power and potency, having the great blond child-man under her will and her stroke entirely. (303)

Although Lawrence keeps repeating the word perversity to describe the scene, it would be more apt to interpret the scene as a reenactment of the dyadic mother-child relationship of the pre-Oedipal stage. They enjoy the relationship as if there were no other people in the world – the knowledge of the other or their consciousness of the others would hinder the experience. As to Mrs. Bolton, who is appropriately referred to as Magna Mater, she represents the omnipotent phallic mother of the pre-Oedipal stage.

Once the relationship turns into an enactment of the dyadic mother-child relationship, it follows that Clifford should desire to be the fulfillment of his mother's desire: the phallus. Their relationship is essentially narcissistic for both parties. What they seek through the relationship is not loving the other, but being loved by the other, which has different significations for each. Clifford's ego seeks fulfillment after he loses Connie, as any mourning necessitates, and Mrs. Bolton, already a lonely woman, seeks self-affirmation through the attention she receives from this child-man from a higher class to which she can never have access. With the help of the self-esteem Clifford acquires through this relationship, he concentrates more on his business at the mines.:

> This perverted child-man was now a *real* business-man; when it was a question of affairs, he was an absolute he-man, sharp as needle, and impervious as a bit of steel. … he had an almost uncanny shrewdness, hardness, and a straight sharp punch. It was as if his very passivity and prostitution to the Magna Mater gave him insight into material business affairs, and lent him a certain remarkable inhuman force. The wallowing in private emotion, the utter abasement of his manly self, seemed to lend him a second a nature, cold, almost visionary, business clever. In business he was quite inhuman. (303-4)

In this way, he becomes successful and powerful, i.e. phallic

It was already Clifford's emotional and physical disability that enforced him to retreat from life into the limited space of Wragby. However, his ego had to find the compromise between the demands of his id and superego in the inadequate space in which he can act. In order to prevent the self from a total collapse, his ego weaves a life of pure intellectual activity. However, as it will be seen in the case of Connie, the unconscious awareness of the dissatisfaction with his life renders him restless, aggressive and even excessively authoritarian, especially towards people from inferior class, including Mellors. As a recompense, he seeks satisfaction in the kind of relationship he *can* have as his mother's son.

Connie is essentially a character quite different from Clifford, although her initial depictions suggest great affinities between the two. In the years before she got married to Clifford, Connie had spent some years in the intellectual circles in various cities in Europe. Thus, she had the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of intellectual activity, her favorite being the conversations they had in groups of friends. Unlike Clifford, and because she had open-minded parents, she had also had sexual relations before her marriage, but she could not reach the kind of sexual maturity required to enable her to achieve the spontaneity, loss of self and unison with nature that Lawrence idealizes. She believed that the most important thing was the "passionate talk", and her early sexual experience was more in the manner of granting men what they asked for rather than seeking fulfillment of her own desire.

However, in her life with Clifford and among the people of her class, she has an unconscious sense of being misplaced, which gives her a constant feeling of restlessness aggravated by the absence of sex in her life. At Wragby, where everything works with clockwork precision with the help of the servants, she cannot become the lady of the house, and she can find almost nothing with which to entertain herself. Clifford's friends occasionally visit them, and they pass the nights away chatting, expecting Connie to accompany them but not interfere in their conversation. Woman, for them, is the other to whom they show off with their discourse, but with whom they can have no intimacy. The only activity Connie can occupy herself with is helping Clifford in his writing, which is far from being satisfactory for her.

Subsequently, with nothing to cathect her libido, she begins to manifest signs of hysteria, as defined in Freud's case histories, such as involuntary movement of her body parts, faintness, palpitation, and a loss of appetite and weight:

> Connie was aware, however, of a growing restlessness. Out of her disconnexion, a restlessness was taking possession of her like madness. It twitched her limbs when she didn't want to twitch them, it jerked her spine when she didn't want to jerk upright but preferred to rest comfortably. It thrilled inside her body, in her womb, somewhere, till she felt she must jump into water and swim to get away from it; a mad restlessness. It made her heart beat violently for no reason. And she was getting thinner. (22)

As Eagleton explains, for Lawrence, identity is not a matter of difference but an absolute, and finding one's fulfillment is possible through the other – and not in the other (265). The absence of sex in her life also devoids Connie of the self-affirmation one seeks in relation with the other. Lack of interest in her body, both by herself and by an other, coupled with the mental restlessness she experiences, alters her perception of her body:

> … Her skin was faintly tawny, her limbs had a certain stillness, her body should have had a full, down-slipping richness; but it lacked something.
>
> Instead of ripening its firm, down-running curves, her body was flattening and going a little harsh. It was as if it had not had enough sun and warmth; it was a little greyish and sapless.
>
> Disappointed of its real womanhood, it had not succeeded in becoming boyish, and unsubstantial, and transparent; instead it had gone opaque.

The displeasures she has with her body is only relieved when she learns to love and touch the other's body, and when the other loves her body.

The idea that the self is realized through the other is another anticipation of Lacanian theory that can be found in Lawrence's philosophy. Lacan argues that, starting with the construction of the image of the self in the mirror perceived as the other, continuing with the desire of to be the object of mother's desire and, finally, by being determined by the symbolic, the discourse of the big Other, desire is always the desire of the other, and therefore the subject is always erased the moment it is constituted. Although the psychoanalytical implications of this theory are obviously

different, it can be argued that, as a metaphoric enactment of both Lawrence's and Lacan's approach, Connie's process of self-realization begins in her trips to the wood, through her love-making with Mellors.

Oliver Mellors is the gamekeeper for the Chatterley family. He lives almost the life of a recluse in a small cottage in the wood. He has been through various experiences, including serving in the army in India, and has become frustrated with people, with the manner in which people live their lives and relationships. Both because of his loss of hope in life and his desire to protect himself from further disappointment and pain, he has chosen to repress all his desires, for wealth, anything material and for sex. In a sense, he retreats from life, but for totally different reasons from those of Clifford. It should be noted that the fact that Mellors does not live in accordance with Lawrence's ideals at the beginning of the story is not because he lacks the potential or knowledge to do so, but because he has not been able to find the right person to actualize that ideal.

Mellors has a deep understanding of human nature, and a maturity and self-confidence that gives him independence from the other people's judgments, something which both frustrates and fascinates others. The reasons for both the frustration and the fascination are the same; he represents the kind of integrity they unconsciously wish to have but cannot. Although, Mellors also goes through a transformation in his encounter with Connie, it is not as radical a transformation as Connie undergoes. Hence, Mellors acts as the embodiment of the Lawrencian ideal of being. However, the title of the novel, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which Lawrence later changed from *Tenderness*[57] (Langbaum, 289), indicates that it is neither Mellors

[57] Robert Langbaum explains that the initial title of the novel was *Tenderness*, a term that reflects the most important attribute of the relationship between Connie and Mellors (289). Lawrence uses both

nor Connie alone, who is the ideal character of the novel; rather, it is Mellors by way of being Connie's lover through his relationship with her.

Eagleton mentions that Lawrence calls a relationship where parties lose their identities a "horrid merging and mingling" of selves (267). Hence, others can be vital as well as obstacles in coming into being (265), and the ideal is to be "apart and autonomous" but "closed and self-complete" (267). Connie and Mellors achieve distinctness in their togetherness, as they respect each other's decisions. For instance, from the very beginning Mellors warns Connie about the problems their affair will inevitably cause and leaves her to make her decision herself. In addition, although he is not very pleased with the idea, he does not object to Connie's going to Venice. Likewise, Connie, although she is truly distraught with the situation, waits patiently and without interfering until Mellors sorts out his problem with his wife. Hence, they do not overburden their relationship with unnecessary whims, and they do not seek being physically together all the time in order to feel the bond between them. At the end of the novel, when they have to stay away from each other for a while, Mellors writes in his letter:

> We have to be separate for a while, …
> Never mind, never mind, we won't get worked up. We really trust in the little flame, and in the unnamed god that shield it from being blown out. There is so much of you here with me, really, that it's a pity you aren't all here. …
> But a great deal of us is together, and we can but abide by it, and steer our course to meet soon. (314)

Although autonomy is desired in the relationship, to experience unison with the other, to unravel the unconscious and thereby become "alive" and one with nature in the Lawrencian sense, one has to be able to abandon the self in sex. Mellors

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the noun "tenderness" and the adjective "tender" in his depictions of their relationship to accentuate the significance of the feeling in his ideal male-female relationships.

complains that he had not been able to find a woman who can completely give herself until he met Connie. He remembers his wife Bertha almost with disgust for the way she had had sex with him:

> She treated me with insolence. And she got so's she'd never have me when I wanted her: never. Always put me off, brutal as you like. And then she'd put me off, and I didn't want her, she'd come all lovey-dovey, and get me. And I always went. But when I had her, she'd never come off when I did. Never! She'd just wait. If I kept back for half an hour, she'd keep back longer. And when I'd come and really finished, then she'd start on her own account, and I had to stop inside her till she brought herself off, wriggling and shouting, she'd clutch clutch with herself down there, and then she'd come off, fair in ecstasy. And then she's say: That was lovely! (210)

Mellors relates Bertha's attitude in sex to her inability to abandon her feeling of self: "Self! Self! Self! all self! tearing and shouting! They talk about men's selfishness, but I doubt if it can ever touch a woman's blind beakishness, once she's gone that way" (210).

Connie had a similar experience with Michaelis, the lover she had had before Mellors. However, their failure to achieve the ideal experience of sex, and hence the ideal relationship, was more because Michaelis was not good at making love and waiting for Connie's satisfaction than it was due to Connie's inability to let go of her self. Michaelis was so absorbed in his own self that he was unable to realize the true reasons for the failure to attain perfection in their love-makings. His ego is so busy representing a twisted version of reality to him that he projects his own problem to Connie and accuses her of not submitting herself to the relationship.

> 'You couldn't go off at the same time as a man, could you? You'd have to bring yourself off! You'd have to run the show!'
>
> This little speech at the moment, was one of the shocks f her life. Because that passive sort of giving himself was obviously his only real mode of intercourse.
>
> 'What do you mean?' she said.

> ‘You know what I mean. You keep on for hours after I’ve gone off. … and I have to hang on with my teeth till you bring yourself off by your own exertions.’
>
> She was stunned by this unexpected brutality, at the moment when she was glowing with *a sort of pleasure* beyond words, and *a sort of love* for him. Because, after all, like so many modern men, he was finished almost before he had begun. And that forced the woman to be active. (57) [emphasis added]

Such lovemaking leads only to *phallic jouissance* in Lacanian terms. The parties retain their identities, which belong to the symbolic, and what they seek in love making is not the spontaneity, intimacy and sense of unification with the other that sex can offer, but something that again belongs to the symbolic.

Indeed, Mellors observes a similar inclination in Connie and confronts her with it:

> ‘It’s a fact!’ he said. ‘Anything for a bit o warm-heartedness. But the women don’t like it. Even you don’t really like it. You like good, sharp, piercing cold-hearted fucking, and then pretending it’s all sugar. Where’s your tenderness for me? You’re as suspicious of me as a cat is of a dog. I tell you it takes two even to be tender and warm-hearted. You love fucking all right: but *you want it to be called something grand and mysterious, just to flatter your own self-importance. Your own self-importance is more to you, fifty times more, than any man, or being together with a man*. (215) [emphasis added]

Connie, it appears, has to learn how to abandon her sense of the self in sex only gradually. Although she is sincerely sexually attracted to Mellors, and she betrays her image as the Lady of Wragby by having an affair with him, it is not particularly easy for her to step out of her being to merge with the man in sex immediately. Therefore, the first few times that they make love, she just lies motionless and lets Mellors touch her body and derive satisfaction from her. Eventually, she learns how to touch, how to feel and how to let herself from Mellors, and she thereby fulfills her “being” as a woman:

> … And her terror subsided in her breast, her breast dared to be gone in peace, she held nothing. She dared to let go everything, all herself, and be gone in the flood.
>
> And it seemed she was like the sea, nothing but dark waves rising and heaving, heaving with a great swell, so that slowly her whole darkness was in motion, and she was ocean rolling its dark, dumb mass. Oh, and far down inside her the deeps parted and rolled asunder, in long far traveling billows, and ever, at the quick of her, the depths parted and rolled asunder, form the center of soft plunging, as the plunger went deeper and deeper, touching lower, and she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed, the heavier the billows of her rolled away to some shore, uncovering her, and closer and closer plunged the palpable unknown, and further and further rolled the waves of herself away from herself, leaving her, till suddenly, in a soft, shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman. (181)

The way Lawrence describes orgasm here and elsewhere anticipates Lacanian *jouissance* as an experience outside the symbolic, beyond language, and beyond the self, belonging to the imaginary. They not only lose themselves and retreat into the indistinct polymorphous chaos of the pre-Oedipal, or the imaginary, but also lack the words to define their sensations; retreating into the unconscious, their mental faculties fail them:

> He held her close, but he said nothing. He would never say anything.
> … Her whole self quivered unconscious and alive, like plasm. She could not know what it was. She could not remember what it had been. Only that it had been more lovely than anything ever could be. Only that. And afterwards she was utterly still, utterly unknowing, she was not aware for how long. And he was still with her, in an unfathomable silence along with her. And of this, they would never speak. (182)

Lawrence reflects on the importance of losing the self in love-making, not only with his general depiction of the sexual intercourse, but also with his careful planning of the use of proper names and pronouns. Until the sexual intercourse when Connie manages to abandon her sense of the self, throughout his descriptions of the sexual intercourse, Lawrence refers to Mellors with the pronoun “he” but continues to use Connie’s name. Only the scene in which Connie reaches simultaneous orgasm with

Mellors is narrated with the use of pronouns "he" and "she" throughout, indicating their namelessness, but being essentially male and female. Only then do they leave their attributes that make them Mellors and Connie, become one with each other and nature simply as sexed beings and step outside language.

The transformation Connie undergoes in her relationship with Mellors is also reflected in her mental perception of everything in life. She is no longer the girl who enjoys "passionate talk", but a woman who revels in her bodily experience. With the new insight she acquired, she also begins to confront Clifford in their discussions. The following lengthy passage from her discussion with Clifford upon a book he had been reading conveys many meanings at the same time:

> … 'Still, I think there is something in the idea that the universe is physically wasting and spiritually ascending.'
>
> 'Do you? Then let it ascend, so long as it leaves me safely and solidly physically here below.'
>
> 'Do you like your physique?' he asked.
>
> 'I love it!' And through her mind went the words: It's the nicest, nicest woman's arse as is![58]
>
> 'But that is really rather extraordinary, because there's no denying it's an encumbrance. But then I suppose a woman doesn't take a supreme pleasure in the life of mind.'
>
> 'Supreme pleasure?' she said, looking up at him. '… No thank you! Give me the body. I believe the life of the body is a greater reality than the life of the mind: when the body is really wakened to life. But so many people, like your famous wind-machine, have only got minds tacked on to their physical corpses."
>
> He looked at her in wonder.
>
> 'The life of the body,' he said, 'is just the life of the animals.'
>
> 'And that's better than the life of the professional corpses. But it's not true! The human body is only just coming to real life. With the Greeks it gave a lovely flicker, then Plato and Aristotle killed it, and Jesus finished it off. But now the body is coming really to life, it is really rising from the tomb. And it will be lovely, lovely life in the lovely universe, the life of the human body.' (244-5)

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[58] It is interesting to note here that, for some reason, the prominent scholar of English literature and translator Akşit Göktürk skipped this sentence in his translation of the novel into Turkish, which might be an intentional act of censorship on his part, though quite unlikely, or a Freudian slip either by him or the type setter.

In addition to reflecting the realization Connie achieved in her relationship with Mellors, the passage is significant in that, through Connie's opposition to Clifford, Lawrence conveys to the reader his judgment about modern society. He sums up his view about the philosophical and religious suppression human body had to endure through the ages and points at the subversion that has started to take place. Therefore, Connie's argument also resonates with Lawrence's optimistic statement about the future.

It is this optimistic note that, in a sense, makes the end of the novel fold upon itself with a circular move to connect with the opening statement: "Ours is essentially a tragic age, so we refuse to take it tragically" (5). The very first sentence can be read as conveying Mellor's, thereby Lawrence's, attitude towards their contemporary society. Mellors is a character with a political agenda, which Lawrence makes him state sometimes too elaborately.[59] Mellors had lost faith in the possibility of living a life independent of the insensible society that had been numbed by centuries of repression. However, his hopes are renewed as a result of his satisfying relationship with Connie. In the letter which ends the novel, although he expresses his discontent with the current state of affairs in his life, he has a hopeful expectation for the future, for their coming together, symbolized in their love-making and in the names they have given to their sexual organs, John Thomas and Lady Jane: "But a great deal of us is together, and we can abide by it, and steer our courses to meet soon. John Thomas says good-night to Lady Jane, a little droopingly, but with a hopeful heart" (314).

Although Lawrence expressed his dissatisfaction with psychoanalysis, it is undeniable that it is the changing discursive attitude to the self that started with

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[59] Lawrence has been criticized for using his characters as his mouthpiece too explicitly.

Nietzsche and acquired a new impetus with psychoanalysis that created the hopeful possibility of a changing world. It may be argued that it is the lack of idealization of erotic desire that Lawrence seeks, but cannot find, in psychoanalysis which frustrates him about this theory. It needs to be repeated that psychoanalysis is an amoral strategy of exploring the manifestations of the unconscious, as Lacan states, rather than a continuation of the tradition of philosophical thinking which sublimates an ideal but represses one aspect of the binary opposites. Therefore, while Lawrence uses his psychoanalytical knowledge and insights in the creation of his characters and story, he adds his ideal of erotic desire, the very desire that would be elevated to the status of the *Thing* instead of the former ideals in the following decades. He contributes to the acknowledgement of the fact that erotic desire is as an essential aspect of human relations, especially between man and woman and saves erotic desire from the obligation of being told as an experience lived in confined spaces and brothels, or as perverse fantasies of indulgent men. D.H. Lawrence, thus, contributes to the liberation of desire that had been initiated with the advent of psychoanalysis.

CHAPTER VIII

DESIRE CELEBRATED: READING BALLARD'S *CRASH* THROUGH POST-STRUCTURALIST DISCOURSES ON DESIRE

By the mid-twentieth century, different perspectives on desire, particularly erotic desire had begun to proliferate. Most of them were informed by the psychoanalytical approach initiated by Freud, and others reflected the idiosyncratic approaches of the individual critics. Lacan started to give his famous one-year seminars in 1950. Herbert Marcuse and Erich Fromm, critics associated with the Frankfurt School, wrote their best known books, *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and *Escape from Freedom* (1941), respectively, in which they combined psychoanalytical approach with Marxism. Georges Bataille, a French writer whose work influenced many critics including Lacan, had already published his novel *Story of Eye* – infamous for its obscene content – in 1928 and published his well-know book *Eroticism* in 1957. Gilles Deleuze began to write in the early 1950s although his better-known works were published in the following decade, and published books written in collaboration with Felix Guattari in the 1970s. The second half of the twentieth century also witnessed feminist theoreticians, the subject of the following chapter, accelerating the establishment of the perception of desire as a significant aspect of human psyche, a noteworthy social force and a powerful element of politics.

The previously mentioned theory of eroticism by Bataille, which establishes a parallel between the ecstatic feeling involved in eroticism and the feeling of death, alludes to Freud's theory about the death instinct. As will be remembered, Bataille

argues that mysticism and eroticism are two ecstatic feelings through which the subject abandons a sense of identity and reaches a selfless state which is, in a sense, equivalent to death since the self no longer 'is'. Freud explained that the death instinct is also an orientation toward a state of utter stability of no tension, hence non-existence. However, Bataille's notion differs from Freud's in that Bataille considers this state, especially through eroticism, a transgression, a liberation from the domination of the self. For Bataille, transgression is an inner experience in which the individual exceeds the bounds of rational, everyday behavior, which is constrained by considerations of profit, productivity and self-preservation (Suleiman 75).

Marcuse and Fromm combine Freudian psychoanalysis with Marxism, explaining how society represses individuals' desires in order to mould them into the shape required. In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse criticizes Freud's theory of repression, in which Freud sees repression and sublimation of otherwise non-productive desires as a precondition of civilization. However, Marcuse does realize that it is not repression *per se*, but what he calls "surplus repression", exerted by the contingent social institutions, that is problematic. On the other hand, in *Escape from Freedom*, Fromm analyzes the motives that prompt individuals to seek submission to an authority rather than acting upon their own desires independently. He argues that being free implies taking on the responsibility of the consequences of one's actions, which is not always easy to do. In either case, the relation of an individual's desire to society and politics is examined, thereby attributing to desire, which had been treated as a personal phenomenon thus far, political and social implications.

1950s are also the years, when after a century of critique of metaphysics and the possibility of arriving at all-conclusive theories to explain the world as well as

the capacity of language to represent reality, poststructuralism dominated the intellectual arena. The discursively of reality and the reliance of the subject on discourse for its constitution both undermined any possibility of positing a final universal truth and implied the death of the "subject" as an agent in the constitution of its life and meaning. This attitude also had its counterpart on the perspectives of desire as already seen in the example of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Deleuze and Guattari's approach to desire also resonate with the poststructuralist theory.

Deleuze and Guattari's thought entail a politics of desire in which desire is conceived, unlike in Bataille,[60] as an infinitely productive force. Their notion of desire is an integral part of general philosophy. In their two-volume study, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* (both with the subtitle, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*), they formulate a theory of transcendental empiricism, which involves the idea that life is a totality of fluxes of every possible idea and experience independent of the subject. They privilege this pre-representational realm, a chaotic coexistence of fluxes – reminiscent of Lacanian Real. Some of these fluxes are then picked on up by the human, who then synthesizes them into representational schemes of meaning to transform them into its experience of reality, a Virtual Reality. As Žižek rightly observes, the idea of Virtual in Deleuze's philosophy is "ultimately the Symbolic as such" (*Organs*, 4). Deleuze and Guattari postulate their idea of desire apropos this perspective of life. In their view, desire is in itself a productive and combinatory force that aims at establishing continuous relations between ideas, experiences and things and opens up to multiplicity, infinity and excess. For them "[d]esire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented. Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn,

[60] However, it needs to be noted that the kind of production Deleuze and Guattari have in mind is different from Bataille's in that theirs is not necessarily a production for utility, but production *per se*.

and breaks the flows" (*Anti-Oedipus*, 7). "Desire does not 'want' revolution, it is revolutionary in its own right, as though involuntarily, by wanting what it wants" (*Anti-Oedipus*, 116). Hence, they criticize Freud and Lacan for constructing their theories, especially their notions of desire, around the concept of constitutive lack at the center of the formation of the subject.

In particular, Deleuze and Guattari object to Freud's delineation of formation of the subject and establishment of later experience of the individual with respect to the Oedipus complex, because this imposes a single explanation for the working of desire, and, moreover, fails to account persuasively for the deviances Freud observes in clinical cases. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that the inexplicable phenomena Freud observes, including female sexuality, actually testify to the productivity and multiplicity of the manifestations of desire. They argue that the analyst only imposes an Oedipal explanation onto the analysand's delineation of his/her experience, which could have been explained in other terms.

Deleuze and Guattari also object to desire's being constantly associated with pleasure, while admitting the individuals' orientation toward it, and that the idea of "pleasure discharge" is revealing. In "What is Desire?" Deleuze says,

> In speaking of desire we were no longer thinking of pleasure and its festivals. Certainly pleasure is agreeable; certainly we move toward it with all our might. But in its most attractive and indispensable forms, it comes rather as an interruption in the process of desire as constitution of a field of immanence. There is nothing more revealing than the idea of a pleasure discharge; once pleasure is attained, one would have a little calm before desire is rekindled: there is a lot of hatred, or fear, of desire, in the cult of pleasure. Pleasure is the attribution of the affect, the affection for a person or subject, it is the only means for a person to "find himself again" in the process of desire that overwhelms him. Pleasures, even the most artificial, or the dizziest, can only be reterriorialization. Desire does nor have pleasure as its norm, but this is not in the name of an internal lack which could not be filled, but on the contrary by virtue of its positivity; that is, of the plane of consistence that it traces in the course of its process. It is the same error which relates desire to the law of the lack and to the norm of pleasure. It is

> when you keep relating desire to pleasure, to the attainment of pleasure, that you also notice that something fundamental is missing. (139)

Although it is not explicitly stated, Deleuze and Guattari's main target here is again Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis. They contradict the cult of pleasure on the basis of its temporary interruption of the flux of desire. Hence, they refuse to see pleasure as an end in itself. Ironically, however, neither Freud nor Lacan associate desire solely with pleasure. Freud conceives of the death instinct as a source of desires that are far from being pleasing. Similarly, Lacan defines true satisfaction in desire not as its attainment, but rather its postponement, and the accompanying feeling, especially in *jouissance*, as being more unpleasant than pleasurable. Moreover, his arguments that desire is, in essence, insatiable, and that each semblance of satisfaction is only temporary, resonate with Deleuze's observation about desire's being rekindled after pleasure is attained.

In the same article, Deleuze also states his position apropos sexuality. He expresses his discontentment with the way psychoanalysis endows sexuality with fantasies implying the involvement of other people – in this criticism he has in mind the oedipal triangle delineated as the basis of sexual attraction to the other. He also objects to the psychoanalytical notion of sexuality as an energy that can be subjected to idealization or sublimation processes as described in psychoanalysis. For him, sexuality

> does not allow itself to be sublimated, or phantasmed, because its concern is elsewhere, in the real vicinity of and in real combination with other fluxes, which exhaust or precipitate it – all depends on the moment and the assemblage. And it is not simply from one to the other of the two "subjects" that this vicinity or combination takes place; it is in each of the two that several of the fluxes combine to from a bloc of becoming which makes demands on them both … (*Reader*, 141)

Hence, sexuality is posited to be one of the fluxes in life and is activated, channeled, combined, and/or stopped via desire.

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the body without organs (BwO, the abbreviation they use) works in relation to these fluxes or intensities they envision in life. They took the term BwO from one of Antonin Artaud's plays,[61], and endowed it with further significance in their thought.[62] They explain that the BwO is not the biological body or any image of a body one may have. "It is the body without an image. This imageless, organless body, the non-productive, exists right there where it is produced …" (*Anti-Oedipus*, 8). The BwO can be thought of as any surface on which the fluxes in life can continuously assemble and form combinations. Deleuze and Guattari recurrently emphasize that they use terms like "machine" or "body without organs" not metaphorically but in their literal sense. In this context, the human body is an empty receptor of these fluxes on which they are organized thereby creating the impression that it is actually the body which is the originator of desire. The surface records "the entire processes of production of desire, so that desiring machines seem to emanate from the body without organs" (*Anti-Oedipus*, 11). The surface, they imply, is not only the human body, but any entity that can be modified into a meaning in the signifying chain – for instance, they give the example of capital, which is the body without organs of the capitalist being (*Anti-Oedipus*, 10).

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[61] The term is taken for Artaud's radio play "To Have Done with the Judgement of God".

[62] At the beginning of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari put forth their idiosyncratic use of certain terms and their new terms. They refer to organs as "organ-machines" in relation to their function, and conceive of them as attached to an "energy-machine". Claire Colebrook, in her introductory book to Deleuze's philosophy, *Gilles Deleuze*, explains that their choice of the word "machine" in their terminology is founded on the idea that machines do not have identity or subjectivity, an intent or organizing center, but can be conceived of only in relation to their productive function *per se*, or can be redefined each time they are put to particular use – a bicycle ridden by a boy or displayed as an art object at a museum are the same machines with different uses. Therefore, instead of a term related to the human as an organism or to nature, they use the term "machine" (55-6).

The distinction between *being* and *becoming* in the thought of Deleuze and Guattari is also associated with their notion of the BwO. For them, it is erroneous to conceive of a subject as a coherent and closed entity. Everything is actually in a constant process of becoming. Nothing, no experience or "being", is identical to itself, especially in the passage of time. Moreover, positing such an idea is detrimental and limiting. They propose becoming as a more valid mode of existence and suggest a "nomadic" experience, refusing any fixed position or stability but acting as a BwO through which flows in life can travel without restrictions and without being fixed into permanent structures.

Deleuze and Guattari propose schizoanalysis as a substitute for psychoanalysis, which, they argue, represses desire and blocks its free-flowing energy and productivity. In their terminology, psychoanalysis is one of the ways of territorializing desire. Schizoanalysis,[63] on the other hand, involves deterritorializing the codes of the *socius*, deconstructing the binaries inherent in the representational schemes of meaning as well as the strategies by which repressive hierarchies are constructed. They seek to dissolve the ego and the superego, liberate the pre-personal realm of desire and create postmodern desiring subjects (Best and Kellner, 80). In Lacanian terms, they may be said to be seeking the Real beyond the symbolic, a pursuit prominent feminist figures of their generation also share. Hence, theirs is a celebration of desire, the discourse of which was liberated by psychoanalysis.

The poststructuralist attitude, characterized by the lost faith in the meta-narratives that claim to give a totalizing explanation of an *a priori* reality, in the

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[63] Deleuze and Guattari coined this term as a result of their idealizing the schizoid. As they explain in *Anti-Oedipus*, they privilege the schizoids, who live independent of the reality of the *socius* and speak with an incomprehensible blabber, free from the signifying chain inherent in language, as opposed to the paranoids who live under the constant threat of the Other, who they assume to be monitoring and intending to harm them.

representational capacity of language and in the autonomous self as the source of meaning, had its effect not only on the perspectives of desire but also on the narratives of erotic desire. Together with the proliferation of poststructuralist discourses of desire, the literature of the time multiplied, both in terms of number and in the variety in styles of writing. J. G. Ballard's *Crash* is one the novels that conveyed the changing attitude towards the notions of the subject, language and reality, which inevitably involves an engagement with the different perspectives of desire.

Crash was published in 1972 and made into a film in 1997 by David Cronenberg. Both the novel and the film became the target of controversy as soon as they were released. While the controversy about the novel took place more in the intellectual arena, that surrounding the film involved a larger public, leading to four local English councils banning its showing within their regional jurisdictions. The producer felt the need to organize a meeting to show the film to local newspaper editors and reviewers, where Ballard and the co-producer of the film, Chris Auty, were present to "defend" the film (Hall, spikemagazine.com). In the US, the film would not have been released due to the intervention of Ted Turner, the owner of Fine Line Features, the film's distributor, if the media had not discovered his covert manipulations. Despite the fact that the second half of the twentieth century has seen a celebration of desire in respect of the abundance of perspectives, the reception of works of art by the public had not yet started to enjoy such liberty. However, as had been the case for centuries, such a censoring attitude could not block the flow of desire in narrative and the inevitable return of the Real in writing.

Crash is published after Roland Barthes announced the death of the author in his 1968 essay "The Death of the Author", at a time the literary critics began to

abandon questions about authorial intention. Nevertheless, the provocative content of the novel incited questions as to the motivation and intention of Ballard in writing such a narrative – to celebrate or to criticize the contemporary society – and speculative answers. Jean Baudrillard's essay on Ballard's novel, "Crash", was almost equally controversial due to Baudrillard's "morally ambiguous theory of the postmodern era" (Butterfield, 65). Baudrillard defined *Crash* as "the first great novel of the universe of simulation, the one with which we will all now be concerned – a symbolic universe, but one which, through a sort of reversal of the mass-mediated substance (neon, concrete, car, erotic machinery), appears as if traversed by an intense force of initiation" intense force of initiation" (qtd. in Butterfield 64). However, no other appraisal of either Ballard's novel or Baudrillard's perspective about the postmodern age was so positive.[64]

Examination of a narrative like *Crash* necessitates being perceptive to the questions the text puts forth rather than trying to reduce it to an ethical position or a single perspective. While engaging in a dialogic relationship with both the postmodern culture – of which it is, in a sense, a product – and different perspectives on desire, *Crash* seems to act as a body without organs, which allowing various fluxes to flow through it without being fixed in permanent schemes of meaning. In the collage Ballard creates, he explores the contemporary significations of concepts like reality, language, simulation, life, the human body and technology, making erotic desire the central axis on which the questions are posed. He uses his narrative and characters to examine the close affinity between eroticism and death, the feelings

[64] For a more detailed discussion of the appraisal of the ethical implications of Ballard's *Crash* and Baudrillard's theories of the postmodern era, see Bradley Butterfield's "Ethical Values and Negative Aesthetics: Reconsidering the Baudrillard-Ballard Connection".

of identity and self-loss, which, at certain moments, become a lament for the loss of the real and, at others, a celebration of desire.

Crash opens with the proclamation, "Vaughan died yesterday in his last car-crash" (7). The narrator, who has the same name as the author, James Ballard[65] (henceforth James, to avoid confusion), then proceeds to impart to us Vaughan's obsession with car-crashes, along with other peculiarities of his character, and some of their memories together. However, Vaughan will remain a sinisterly mysterious character in the early parts of the novel, and certain important details of his life are only revealed to the reader gradually as the narrative unfolds.

After this brief introduction to the protagonist who will be central to the lives of all the other characters, the narrative turns to the narrator and, starting from a car-crash, which is the occasion for his meeting Vaughan, introduces us to James Ballard, a 40-year-old married producer of TV commercials. James has a crash on a rainy June evening, after which he is hospitalized with serious injuries. The accident inaugurates a different kind of sensibility in James, as a result of which he begins to perceive everything in sexual terms. His sexual life with his wife Catherine can by no means be said to have been "ordinary" prior to the accident. They have been a couple who seek outside stimulus for excitement in their love-making, such as telling about their intercourse with other people or visual images of sex and violence. The accident also provides the occasion for James to meet two new people: Dr. Helen Remington, the woman who was in the other car when James had the accident and whose husband he killed, and Vaughan. James' relation to Helen, motivated by the strange

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[65] Nicholas Ruddick claims that , by giving the narrator his own name, Ballard attributes to the narrator an authority equivalent to his and implies the text to be autobiographical (354). However, it seems better to interpret this strategy of using his name for the narrator as an attempt to complicate further the boundaries between the real and the fictional, an issue that the whole narrative revolves around.

bond established by way of his being the "murderer" of her husband, continues in a series of emotionless sexual encounters. After befriending Vaughan, James becomes acquainted with people who are rather unusual in terms of their lifestyles for James. He meets Seagrave, a stunt actor who takes part in simulated crashes and has occasional serious injures like brain concussions. He also meets Vera Seagrave, the former's wife and Gabrielle, a crippled car-crash victim who has many scars all over her body. After James' encounter with Vaughan, he and Catherine are drawn into Vaughan's world where they get involved in an array of sexual acts including homosexual intercourse, masturbation, fetishism, voyeurism, and mild episodes of masochism and sadism. In almost all of these sexual acts they are in a car, and the narrative alternates between the delineations of the sexual act and the description of separate parts of the automobile they are in. James accompanies Vaughan to simulated car-crash shows and on his visits to accident scenes where he takes photographs of the victims; he visits Vaughan's photographic studio and shares his voyeurism; he takes part in his rehearsals of killing himself in a car crash. Eventually, he and his wife Catherine even become subjected to Vaughan's doubtfully pseudo-attempts at killing them in a car crash. The narrative proceeds chronologically to finish where it started: Vaughan's death. In short, *Crash*, which lacks a well-defined plot, can be said to be the narrative of a series of repetitive events and sexual acts which start with the narrator's being injured in a car crash and ends with the protagonist's death in a car crash.

The association of car-crashes with sexuality immediately brings to mind the term "auto-eroticism", which many critics did not fail to point out in their studies. However, the implications of the allusion to this psychoanalytical term regarding the perspectives on desire have not been dwelled on sufficiently. The term "auto-

eroticism", other than being simply a metaphor literalized in *Crash*, has implications about what might be claimed to be the central the idea around which the whole narrative revolves: the invasion of life by simulacra and technology. In "On Narcissism: An Introduction", Freud explains that auto-eroticism – an infant's gaining sexual stimulation from its own body – is a phase belonging to the period before the development of the infant's ego, the pre-Oedipal phase, when drives dominate, and when the infant does not yet have the notion of a distinction between the subject and the object. This is also the period when the infant is not yet gendered and enjoys polymorphous perversity. As the autoeroticism of the infant gains psychic substance, the ego begins to develop, initially through primary narcissism, which involves the gradual formation of an ego-ideal, the basis of all engagements with the other in later life, especially in love and sex relations. The Freudian pre-Oedipal phase of autoeroticism corresponds to Lacan's imaginary and hence is outside the symbolic. It belongs to a period where there is yet no ego, no sense of the self, no language, and therefore no meaning. If we translate it into the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, autoeroticism also belongs to the pre-representational phase where the infant's body is not yet marked with the permanent schemes of meaning; it is still an empty body without organs, open to the chaotic fluxes of desire. In addition to these attributes, autoeroticism is the basis for narcissism, only after which the ego can establish an ego-ideal for itself. Following the implications autoeroticism has in these different perspectives on desire, the literal auto-eroticism of the characters in *Crash* can be interpreted as a movement to a realm outside the symbolic, to a pre-representational space where they can resist the territorialization of the *socius* and enjoy the uninhibited fluxes of desire. Moreover, it will also be possible to see how this "regression" serves as the basis for Vaughan's narcissism.

After his accident James has emotions and thoughts which he has difficulty in comprehending. Unable to make sense out of them, he, nevertheless, feels a radical alteration in his perception of himself, his body and the other people. There is only one thing that he feels sure about, that he had never felt this real for years:

> The crash was the only real experience I had been through for years. For the first time I was in physical confrontation with my own body, an inexhaustible encyclopedia of pains and discharges, with the hostile gaze of other people, and with the fact of the dead man. After being bombarded endlessly by road-safety propaganda it was almost a relief to find myself in an actual accident. Like everyone else bludgeoned by these billboard harangues and television films of imaginary accidents, I had felt a vague sense of unease that the gruesome climax of my life was being rehearsed years in advance, and would take place on some high way or road junction known only to the makers of these films. At times I had even speculated on the kind of traffic accident in which I would die. (39)

James' realization seems to sum up the main deadlock of all the characters in the narrative, or rather of the postmodern age: this is essentially a world of simulacra. The poststructuralist theories have already pronounced the self as constructed and therefore without authenticity. In addition, the involvement of technology in every aspect of daily life and proliferation of images via the media, enhancing the virtual reality of the symbolic perhaps more than it had ever been, further alienated individuals from a sense of existence and more importantly from their bodies. The simulacrum of reality based on the dominance of image in a sense created the feeling that people consist of images with total negligence of the living, feeling body.[66] Only the experience of coming close to death, the possibility of the death of the biological body, which is the sole guarantee of one's existence, awakens the individuals to the physical reality of their being.

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[66] This is also a problem the theoreticians who argue for the constructed nature of identity. In the Introduction she wrote for *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler says that she has frequently been confronted with the question "What about the materiality of the body, Judy?" (ix) and finally decided to write the book.

James's occupation, a producer of television commercials, is telling in that he is one of the prime creators of the simulacra that surround individuals. He is not only one of those subjected to the bombardment of images accelerated and enhanced by technology, but also one of the active participants in its creation. His job entails the creation of an image of a perfect life that is 'sold' to people. He and his wife, Catherine, are one couple among the many people of the postmodern age who have become so much reliant on the images to be consumed that they have become unable to feel any excitement without external, virtual aids. Their alienation from a sense of existence independent of the images they consume culminated in the formation of hollow selves which seek meaning and feeling in representations of reality, either verbal or visual. This may be the main reason for their needing to tell each other about their affairs with others or watch images of sex and violence while they are making love. Regarding their sexual intercourse, James observes,

> … these pursuits had begun to make all our relationships, both between ourselves and with other people, more and more abstract. She soon became unable to reach orgasm without an elaborate fantasy… These descriptions seemed to be a language in search of objects, or even, perhaps, the beginning of a new sexuality divorced from any possible physical expression. (35)

Hence, erotic desire between James and Catherine has turned into an affirmation of the Lacanian axiom, "there is no sexual relationship". As will be remembered, with this statement, Lacan alludes to the sexual relationship of partners who cannot escape the symbolic economy in their love-making and calls their *jouissance* phallic, in other words, *jouissance* of the idiot.

Ballard also observes the same "contamination" of sex with the symbolic, which he expresses in an interview with the following words:

> The biological function of sex has been changed to become, like everything else, a function of power, money, domination. So sex becomes a reflection of the external landscape. … Sex has become a sort of communal activity. It's an explicit element in all sorts of other activities--advertising, publicity, sales promotion as well as in film and TV, every conceivable thing you can think of. Elements of sexual imagery are constantly being jolted into the psychological space we inhabit. One has to be aware of these things and the unconscious role they play. (Lewis, 28)

Ballard maintains that, not only does the symbolic interfere with sex, impeding any possibility of transgressing its limits via *jouissance*, but also that the symbolic co-opts sexuality and thereby eliminates its transgressive potential; it endows the sexual with meanings of its own economy like power, domination and money.

If James' role in the simulacra of life is that of a creator of images, Catherine is an ultimate embodiment of it. She is described by James as physically flawless and immaculately clean by James:

> … her wrists were keyboards of perfumes. What had first struck me about Catherine was her immaculate cleanliness, as if she had individually reamed out every square centimeter of her elegant body, separately ventilated every pore. At times the porcelain appearance of her face, an over-elaborate make-up like some demonstration model of a beautiful woman's face, had made me suspect that her whole identity was a charade. I tried to visualize the childhood that had created this beautiful young woman, the prefect forgery of an Ingres. … I would deliberately inspect every orifice I could find, running my fingers around her gums in the hope of seeing even one small knot of trapped veal, forcing my tongue into her ear in the hope of finding a trace of the taste of wax, inspecting her nostrils and navel, and lastly her vulva and anus. I would have to run my forefinger to its root before I could extract even a faint scent of faecal matter, a thins brown rim under my fingernail. (112)

This description of Catherine, which starts with the elegant details of her body, and ends with what may appear to the reader as gross details, actually indicates two important points; first, if it sounds disturbing to the reader, the description invites the readers to realize how at home they are with certain details of biological reality of the body but alienated from the others. Second, it also shows how "unreal" Catherine is, how distant she is to her biological reality. She is more like an art-work, a painting

by Ingres, than a real woman. James has to imagine the time she was a child and still not that bound by the impact of the simulacra that surround the individual in order to assure himself that she is actually an individual with a lived history; however, she is now an abstraction of beauty and cleanliness without any signs of life.

This immersion into simulacra is what leads James to define his accident as the "only real experience" he had in years. Until then, car crashes had been a part of the world of the images, in which he "consumed" news about accidents and casualties, propaganda about road safety, statistics about each year's accidents, information about simulated crashes for car tests and scenes of crashes from TV programs and movies, all of which have distanced him even more from the reality of a crash which can be fatal. Through James, Ballard wants to articulate his criticism about the current situation in contemporary society. In an interview he says:

> About twenty thousand people a year are killed on the roads in America. Of course, every death is deplored, but collectively it's manslaughter on a gigantic scale; and it's tolerated as part of the price to be paid. Similar tolerances (acceptable casualties) run through the whole of life. There is a sort of built-in deadening of human feeling that is inseparable from the sort of lives we've opted for in the late twentieth century.
>
> You've got to remember to some extent that the communication/media landscape sets the agenda: a media landscape dominated by TV that thrives on sensation. This itself has a numbing effect. … One also gets the hidden agendas beginning to emerge--the sub-texts that begin to write themselves into the script. Inevitably you see images of an actress making love followed by an injured child being carried from a crashed car, followed by some African prime minister being shot down, followed by an advertisement for a martini. On the unconscious plain, what sort of scenarios are we stitching together out of these events?

As James also observes, this conglomeration of images create the impression that "'[t]hey *are* rather like rehearsals. When we've all rehearsed our separate parts the real thing will begin'" (50). Moreover, the proliferation of images about something that means a tragedy for some people only numb the feeling of others and has a

normalizing effect that leads to the assumption that this is a usual fact of everyday life.

The crash in which James and Helen are injured and Helen's husband dies acts as a gateway to another sensibility for James. He has come close to his own death and witnessed a man dying. He tries to imagine what it must have felt like dying. He tries to conceive the dying man's feelings and final thoughts in his mind: "I had thought of his last moments alive, frantic milliseconds of pain and violence in which he had been catapulted from a pleasant domestic interlude into a concertina of metalized death" (36). He becomes conscious of the elusiveness of life people lead as if it will be theirs forever, and also of the ridiculousness of their obsessions with life, including the images they try to create out of it for themselves. He also realizes how insignificant his own life is in juxtaposition to the general flux of life that flows indifferent to the individual. He thinks about "[his] own small death, as anonymous as a vitrified scar in a scar fossil tree" (57). This is the price to be paid for the kind of life human beings have created for themselves. The postmodern age produced technology which facilitates everyday life, increases the speed with which lives are spent but which, at the same time, has the power to devoid them of their lives, reducing them to statistical casualties.

Death is the ultimate event of loneliness in a person's life. It is the limit one cannot traverse and also the limit that establishes the self's distinctness from the other as well as its distinctness from all there is in the world. It is the experience of being reduced to mere existence, without any attribute of the symbolic, but where there is none. Bataille states that no social relation may bridge the gap between the self and the other that is established with the fact of death – it is only via eroticism that it is temporarily crossed over. This is one of the reasons Lacan associates one's

sense of the self with the beginning of the recognition of the reality of one's mortality. This realization immediately begins to be overlaid by the layers of the symbolic so that it will be kept at a distance from the consciousness. The individual lives without the continual consciousness of its being mortal.

While death is the marker of the other's otherness, the possibility of murder is the extreme form of violence one can exert over the other: the power to put an end to the existence of the other. As Freud explained in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, feelings of aggression and violence are an extension of the death instinct, which seeks stability and lack of tension. However, the other, written with a big or a small "o", is always the source of disturbance for the self,[67] because its presence marks the end of the continuity between the self and the outer world as well as the beginning of a control mechanism that will last to the end of life. In psychoanalytical terms, the first other that one has to realize is the mother, frequently written as (m)other, which indicates the end of the unison with the body of the mother and the surrounding world. The inevitable acceptance of the separation from the (m)other becomes even more unpleasant with the introduction to the big Other, the father, who is also the Law, into the mother-child dyad as explained earlier. Hence, while the other is the precondition for the formation of the self, it is also the end of the Real. The rest of life is destined to be lived, in a sense, under the "surveillance" of the Other. The desire for the murder of the other, starting with the unconscious desire to kill the father, is therefore one of the primordial desires of the human being. That is why the creation myths are immediately followed by the myth about the murder of the brother, and why "thou shall not kill" is one of the Ten Commandments. The death

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[67] Perhaps more than it is dealt with in psychoanalysis, the question of the other and the hostile feelings the subject has for the other has been dwelt upon by many philosophers, especially in the twentieth century.

of the other unconsciously marks the elevation of the Law, a return to the pre-symbolic state of the polymorphous fluidity and sense of wholeness.

In *Crash*, with the murder of Helen's husband, albeit accidental, James has access to the dead man's wife. In a sense the Law that forbids James' access to her has been elevated. Moreover, even if not at the conscious level, James recognizes the implicit power involved in an act of murder, and he projects his unconscious satisfaction from the act onto Catherine. He wonders, "Did [Catherine] respect, and perhaps even envy me for having killed someone, in almost the only way in which one can now legally take another person's life?" (45). He killed someone but did not have to pay for it; this is a transgression made possible by technology.

The association between death and sexuality made by various theoreticians has already been discussed. Bataille and Lacan assert that the feeling of the loss of the sense of the self, which involves a cutting of ties with the mode of existence one has in everyday life, is, in their terms, characteristic of the feeling of erotic ecstasy or *jouissance*,. This sense of utter nullity is what sexuality shares with death. For Bataille eroticism and for Lacan *jouissance* are also means of transgressing the Law. Hence, coming this close to his own death and being the cause of another's death, though involuntarily, incites new sexual feelings in James. His numbed feelings regain vitality and a new sexual vigor is activated in him. He says, "This obsession with the sexual possibilities of everything around me had been jerked loose from my mind by the crash" (29). By being the means of defeating death and the Law via the accident, car-crashes acquire significations that are synonymous with *jouissance*, not only for James, but also for all the other characters in the novel.

Both the realization of one's mortality invoked by the crash and the affinity between the feeling of coming close to death and sexuality excite such feelings in

James, as well as other characters in the novel. There is one more important consequence of the experience of the crash for every victim. At the very moment of the accident, James realizes that the very circumstances of the accident and the following period of hospitalization are exempt from the everyday rules of the symbolic. What would otherwise be outrageous is perfectly acceptable during accidents. He observes that when people come to help them after the accident, they touch the body of the other woman in the other car in a careless manner, and she responds to them totally normally. Once out of the car, she urinates involuntarily, and the rescue pilot reassures her understandingly. Later at the hospital, nurses attend to James' needs, and even hold his penis in their hand waiting for him to decide which side he wanted it. These observations enable James to conceive of those unsaid rules inherent in the symbolic which do not apply in moments of crises. Beginning with the case of the accident and applying the same logic to other circumstances, he further speculates what could have been utterly impossible according to the codes of the *socius*:

> Two firemen cut the door from its hinges. … If one of them had unbuttoned his coarse serge trousers to reveal his genitalia, and pressed his penis into the bloody crotch of my armpit, even this bizarre act would have been acceptable in terms of the *stylization* of violence and rescue. I waited for someone to reassure me as I sat there, dressed in another man's blood while the urine of his young widow formed rainbows around my rescuers' feet. By the same *nightmare logic* the firemen might trace obscene or humorous slogans on the scalding concrete with their carbon dioxide sprays, executioners could dress their victims in grotesque costumes. In return, the victims would stylize the entrances to their deaths with ironic gestures, solemnly kissing their executioners' gun-butts, desecrating imaginary flags. Surgeons would cut themselves carelessly before making their first incisions, wives casually murmur the names of their lovers at the moment of their husbands' orgasms, the whore mouthing her customer's penis might without offense bite a small circle of tissue from the upper curvature of his glans. (23)

For James, the kind of logic that might make such events possible is a nightmare logic as it implies breaking down of the representational schemes of meaning, the rules of the *socius*, which James is not yet ready to dismiss because he has only now been awakened to a new sensibility, and he has not managed to escape the territorialization of desire, which, using the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, had imposed upon him "the desire to desire its own repression". However, once the Real returns in the trauma, once the fixity of the fluxes of desire are unsettled and the individual begins to notice the virtuality of what s/he knew to be reality, all the encodings that had formerly been secure begin to be decoded.

In relation to Lacan's theories, Žižek observes that if one encounters the unconscious, hence the Real, only in dreams, from that perspective everyday life becomes an illusion that conceals in its symbolic web the repressed Real underlying it. Hence, sleep is actually a waking up to reality. It follows that, the social reality is a fragile construction that is under constant risk of being invaded by the Real (*Awry*,17). This is what happens to the characters in *Crash* after the experience of the trauma of a crash. Their whole transformation can be read as a literalized metaphor of the pre-representational, the pre-symbolic invading the symbolic, as a result of which they become empty bodies without organs and allow fluxes of desire to move upon them without interference or any other act of control. This "regression" to the pre-symbolic becomes a literalized metaphor of autoeroticism since beginning with the moment of the accident, the victim of a car crash is treated like a baby with nurses, mother substitutes, attending to all the survival needs of the patient with total disregard to the gender of the patient: "… all these women around me seemed to attend only to my most infantile zones. … these starched women in all their roles reminded me of those who attended my childhood, commissaries guarding my

orifices" (33), says James narrating his experience at the hospital. Not only are his "orifices attended" by the nurses, but he is also preoccupied with thoughts about his and people's life processes, their orifices and bodily fluids associated with those orifices; he keeps thinking about vomit, vaginal mucus, faecal matter. In addition to being an extension of the literalized metaphor of auto-eroticism, the attention paid to such details emphasizes how people live in total indifference to their own and other people's details about the biological body. James also tries to think how such neglected aspects of human existence actually interacts with life:

> I leaned my forehead against the nurse's strong thigh as I vomited. Beside my bruised mouth her worn fingers contrasted strangely with her youthful skin. I found myself thinking of her natal cleft. When had she last washed this moist gulley? During my recovery, questions like this one obsessed me as I talked to the doctors and nurses. When had they last bathed their genitalia, did small grains of faecal matter still cling to their anuses as they prescribed some antibiotic for a streptococcal throat, did the odour of illicit sex acts infest their underwear as they drove home form the hospital, the traces of smegma and vaginal mucus on their hands marrying with the splashed engine coolant of unexpected car-crashes? (28-9)

From the breach opened up in the symbolic, the Real begins to invade James annihilating the symbolic screen that conceals what lies beyond it. He develops another awareness that accounts for the body; one that considers how the living body is involved in the processes of life. Those who undergo the same experience begin to live in a new world, "a conscious world into which the unconscious is leaking, rendering it dreamlike, but at the same time paradoxically more real" (Ruddick, 357). What initiates the orientation toward the pre-representational realm of fluidity and sensuality in the crash victims is the realization of their earlier immersion in the simulacra and their alienation from their living body, and, in contrast, their affirmation of life and desire as opposed to the negation of life inherent in the territorializing forces of the *socius*. However, this is by no means a voluntary act of

changing realms; rather, it is an unconscious invasion of the Real, through which they create their alternative reality like a schizophrenic who opens up him/herself to the possibilities of their desires and bodies. Indeed, one of the most frequently repeated words in Crash is "possibilities". The reader comes across the word "possibilities" every few pages and sometimes more than once on a single page. Ballard's emphasis is on the previously unfulfilled possibilities that open up for the individual through the experience of autoeroticism, with both its meanings, that James, Helen, Gabrielle, Catherine and Vaughan find themselves drawn into. The word "possibilities" implies previously unthought-of ideas, unlived experiences and unfelt emotions, thus resisting the given meanings of the symbolic. Hence, their perception of almost everything, and most importantly their perceptions of their bodies and sex, is altered in radical ways.

One of the perceptions that changes with the experience of the crash is the meaning of scars and wounds. James and others realize that the body is not merely an image or the biological support of existence, but that it is also a living record of their lives. Just as every wrinkle is a sign of passing time and aging, every scar is an inscription that an event leaves on the body. The event during which the body is wounded or the thought that passes through the mind is inscribed there permanently. James imagines a woman injured in a car crash at the moment she fantasizes about the man sitting next to her. After the crash, "her body would be marked for years by the bruising of her abdomen against the seat belt stanchion" reminding her "for ever this imagined infidelity" (27). Likewise, he would remember Renata, his secretary, with whom he had been having an affair that had ended just before the accident, and how he hurt her whenever he sees his own wounds. Vaughan's scars will be a reminder of his forever missed fame. Hence, the body is the embodiment of memory.

This perception of the body stands in total contrast to the image of the body propagated by the media, which requires the preservation of an immaculate body, a kind of impersonal body.

Together with the scars, the meaning of wounds also changes. Wounds spoil the integrity of the body; in a sense they disrupt its coherence. They are like the orifices which open to the inside of the body. In *Crash*, wounds and scars attain sexual significance and are treated as a means of access to the inside of the body and hence an alternative way of transgressing the boundary between the two bodies. They offer new "possibilities" for a new kind of sexuality.

> I explored the scars on her thighs and arms, feeling for the wound areas under her left breast, as she in turn explored mine, deciphering together these codes of a sexuality made possible by our two car-crashes. …
>
> I dreamed of other accidents that might enlarge this repertory of orifices, … the wounds upon which erotic fantasies might be erected, the extraordinary sexual acts celebrating the possibilities of unimagined technologies. (178-9)

Refusing to be contained within given definitions and experiences of desire, Ballard's characters submit themselves to the free flow of desire in order to explore new possibilities. Moreover, celebration of the wounds imply giving life to those who died at the accidents: "… the translation of these injuries in terms of our fantasies and sexual behavior was the only means of re-invigorating these wounded and dying victims" (190). Hence, an eroticism that entailed loving the wounds also meant an affirmation of life.

The character who is most severely injured in a car crash and whose body has become a heterogeneous compound of organic and inorganic matter is Gabrielle. However, she is not described as a disabled person with limited physical abilities but rather as a person who has attained previously inconceivable potential: "This agreeable young woman, with her pleasant sexual dreams, had been born within the

breaking contours of her crushed sports car. … The crushed body of the sports car had turned her into a creature of free and perverse sexuality, releasing … deviant possibilities of her sex" (99). The crash enabled her to discover the "real possibilities of her body" (99). Contradicting the criticism of society Ballard explicitly stated in his interviews about the invasion of life by technology, the kind of sexuality experienced by the characters in *Crash* – the subversion of body and technology dichotomy through sexuality – does not have critical undertones, but is narrated as new possibilities offered by the new way of life. In an interview with Jeremy Lewis where Ballard criticized the normalizing effect of media on society, he also suggested his preferred stance:

> We should accept this and not try and fight against this particular tide; instead, to quote Conrad's phrase, we should to some extent immerse ourselves in this destructive element ourselves. This is the environment in which we are immersed, and we might as well keep our eyes open, and try to swim through all this so we get to the other end of the pool, maybe some way will be found of moderating these strains that are present. (37)

Hence, rather than completely condemning current society, Ballard suggests a consciousness which allows for the enjoyment of the possibilities provided, not only via technology, but also through the new kind of morality this life style brings with it, although without a blind acceptance and unquestioning submission to the illusion the simulacra creates.

Despite sharing many characteristics with the other characters in the novel, Vaughan has his distinct attributes that require individual attention. Like James, Vaughan used to be involved in the image-generating media sector. He was a "new-style TV scientist" who "projected a potent image" (63) on television, but who lost his position after a car crash which left his body and his face permanently scarred. It is only later revealed that he is actually longing for the time before the accident that

deprived him of his fame and image in society. He had built his identity on the virtual reality of the simulacrum, on the surface of which he delighted in observing his image as Narcissus did on the surface of the lake that drowned him. His apartment reflects his narcissistic obsession with his image:

> Above all, the apartment was dominated by Vaughan's evident narcissism – the walls of the studio, bathroom and kitchen were covered with photographs of himself, stills from his television programmes, half-plate prints from newspaper photographers, polaroid snapshots of himself on location, enjoying the attentions of the make-up lady, gesturing at the producer for the photographer's benefit. All these photographs dated back to the time before Vaughan's accident, as if the subsequent years marked a temporal no-zone, a period whose urgencies went beyond vanity. Yet, as he moved ground the apartment, taking a shower and changing his clothes, Vaughan was self-consciously absorbed in these fading images, straightening their curling corners as if frightened that when they finally vanished his own identity would also cease to matter. (168).

It was the crash that put an end to his existence absorbed by his image on television, and which also confronted him with the reality of his mortality, making him realize that there is a flesh and blood being beneath the superficial image. The crash has two important consequences for Vaughan's life; he begins to desire to beat death by way of the symbolic, which dismissed him as easily as it encapsulated him, and he begins to desire "a new sexuality born from a perverse technology" (13).

The confrontation with his mortality not only implies the inevitable end of his existence, but also the shattering down of the illusion of potency Vaughan had started to enjoy by becoming well-known with his television program. He realizes the smallness of his existence and indifference of life to his presence, just as James did after his accident. This has led him to a fascination with the idea of immortality achieved through becoming world famous. Vaughan observes that it has been possible for certain people to survive as an image even if they died bodily. One of the chief examples he has in mind is the U.S. President John F Kennedy. As Ballard said

in an interview with Jane Baxterin for *Guardian Unlimited*, "Kennedy was himself largely a media construct, with an emotional appeal that was as calculated as any advertising campaign. His life and death were both complete fictions, or very nearly". Himself a fiction and his death a symbolic immortality, Kennedy becomes one of Vaughan's obsessions. Therefore, he drives a "Lincoln Continental, the same make of vehicle as the open limousine in which President Kennedy had died" (64). He is also fascinated by other well-known people who died in car accidents such as James Dean, Albert Camus and Jane Mansfield. "How much more mysterious would be our own deaths, and those of the famous and powerful?" (13) is a question that haunts him all the time.

Vaughan does not want to leave his death to chance, unlike his life, which has been permanently changed as a result of a chance accident. As compensation for the lost chance of symbolic immortality he might have achieved through his fame, Vaughan dreams about dying with a celebrity in a car crash. He has already chosen with whom he wants die: Elizabeth Taylor. He even prepares a questionnaire to ask people who they would rather die with, and those choosing Elizabeth Taylor outnumber the others significantly. Elizabeth Taylor was one the best-know actresses and among the most beautiful women globally at the time *Crash* was written.[68]. She has been one of the greatest stars of the image-world, whose fame relies on her physical beauty and sex appeal as much as her acting. With an interesting twist, her mortal body constitutes the basis of her fame in the image world; it is also that body which is going to put an end to her existence while also providing her with

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[68] Dennis A. Foster in "J. G. Ballard's Empire of the Senses: Perversion and the Failure of Authority" suggests that one other reason for Ballard's, or rather Vaughan's, choice of Elizabeth Taylor might be the "widely reported story that she held Montgomery Clift's bleeding head after a car accident Clift had while leaving her house" (525)

immortality in the world of the symbolic. Vaughan dreams of dying with Elizabeth Taylor as he will thereby conjoin his name with hers in immortality – he will have also redeemed his feeling of being wronged and satisfy his narcissism.

Vaughan's desire to die with Elizabeth Taylor may also be interpreted as his "revenge" on the symbolic. He is the leading person in the circle of friends who share the awareness about the virtual reality of life and who, in defiance of the powers of the symbolic upon them, open themselves to the new possibilities the postmodern age has to offer them. Everyone, a crash victim or not, is fascinated by him and almost compete with each other to become his object of desire. By way of uniting with him through sexuality, they unconsciously seek to partake in his consciousness into which he initiated them all. Although seeing Vaughan's quest as a spiritual quest is doubtful, as some commentators argued, his going toward his death without any remorse, and even happily, may be seen as an indication of the fact that he has a better understanding about the altered reality of their circumstances, that is, his crash initiated an awareness about an altered reality for him, as it later does for James. He leads all the characters to the height of "auto-eroticism" and acts as the initiator of the spreading of the constant flux of desire which multiplies through establishing new connections: "… I had the sense that Vaughan was controlling us all, giving each of us what we most wanted and most feared." (96). What they most want and most fear, of course, is death, the ultimate end of the symbolic, the outside of the game of the simulacra. Erotic desire, or *jouissance* is, in a sense, an experience of death. Hence, their repeated sexual acts are like rehearsals for the impending death, like the repeated rehearsals of car crashes.

On the other hand, for everyone in the narrative, after the crash, eroticism, with the feeling of death it involves, implies an affirmation of life; going to the edge

of self-loss and coming back to life, and thereby reconfirming one's aliveness and reopening the self to uninhibited flows of desire. It is not death itself they are seeking, not even Seagrave, who repeatedly risks his life in simulated car-crashes. Vaughan, on the other hand, seeks death and all his rehearsals of crashes are rehearsals for the ultimate "real" experience that will eventually take place: his death. Through his death he aims to inscribe his name on the *text* of the symbolic. In a sense, he wants to defeat life through the symbolic which reduces him to a name, to a number in statistics, and which denies him existence so long as he cannot meet its standard – by not being immaculate enough – in its own play.

Other than the implication of death in both car-crashes and eroticism, there is another affinity between them: They are acts of violating the boundaries of two distinct concrete bodies, that of humans or cars. If one aim of Vaughan is to inscribe himself permanently on the *text* of the symbolic, the other is to transcend and multiply himself through sex and through the crash. The crash does not simply imply the merging of the bodies of two cars, but also of the car and the human. As James observes on his body after the accident, it may even be possible to reconstruct the model of a car by examining the scars on the body of the victim. This merging of the human body and a technological device indicates how technology has become a part of modern lives and even people's bodies. It began to acquire a significance so important as to alter human relations. As Vaughan has intercourse with different people in the novel, he becomes a part of them. His partners become obsessed with him, so much so that even the lines that differentiate one from the other are blurred. Toward the end of the novel, after James has had homosexual intercourse with Vaughan and watched his wife with him from the rearview mirror as they had sex in the back seat, he finds it difficult to maintain a distinct identity from Vaughan;

"Increasingly I was convinced that Vaughan was a projection of my own fantasies and obsessions" (220), he thought. Moreover, when he visits the accident site immediately after he learns the news of Vaughan's death, he feels "[he] was visiting, incognito, the place of [his] own death" (221). This is a mutual experience, since Vaughan also becomes partially James in their relationship. In the end, he chooses to go to his death, not in his Lincoln, but in James' car.

Vaughan's end and his influence on others with the web of desire he forms imply that from the affirmation of life implicit in eroticism, other characters will also move to a pursuit of death – an aspect of eroticism. As soon as Vaughan dies, James finds himself planning his own death, following Vaughan's path: "Already I knew that I was designing the elements of my own car-crash" (224). However, the significance of Vaughan's death is ambivalent. His aim of defeating life, via the symbolic immortality he plans to achieve, fails since Elizabeth Taylor narrowly escapes her death, unknowingly letting Vaughan die alone. Life proves to be indomitable.

Crash has frequently been included within the category of science-fiction, and critics have discussed it with respect to other examples of the genre as well as other novels by Ballard, which can rightly be classified as such. In an interview, Ballard himself expressed that he found the novel's being referred to as science fiction "silly" (Lewis, 36). There is no element of technology or any event that suggests the setting of *Crash* should be other-worldly or belong to a futuristic world. Some characters, like Gabrielle, may be making use of technology to support their mutilated bodies after accidents, but they are not cyborgs or androids. On the contrary, even if the life styles of the people narrated appear unfamiliar and disturbing, the time and place narrated is the contemporary postmodern world, with

all its virtual reality – a paradoxical term that nevertheless expresses the truth of it. Ballard prefers to call his novel "the first pornographic novel based on technology" (Lewis, 38). Hence, rather than creating a world of science-fiction, Ballard seems to be responding to the Lacanian lament whereby "[p]erhaps we should give up the hope of any genuine innovation in the field of ethics – and to a certain extent one might say that a sign of this is to be found in the fact that, in spite of all our theoretical progress, we haven't been able to create one single perversion" (*Ethics*, 15). By transgressing the body and technology dichotomy via *jouissance*, by breaking up the closed circuit of the body through wounds and making it an empty body without organs, he gives full rein to the revolutionary flow of desire to fluctuate without inhibition. In no way negating life, he suggests a mode of living with the consciousness of the simulacra.

CHAPTER IX

DESIRE FEMININIZED: READING KATHY ACKER'S *DON QUIXOTE* AND *GREAT EXPECTATIONS* THROUGH FEMINIST DISCOURSES ON DESIRE

For the first time in the history of Western culture, women started to partake in the production of discourses of desire with special emphasis on female desire in the second half of the twentieth century. Although Freud and Lacan have been criticized for their *phallo(go)centrism*, it needs to be acknowledged that their theories paved the way for a feminist discourse of desire. While it is not possible to talk about the feminist discourse in general – and a feminist discourse of desire in particular – as a uniform and coherent totality, there are certain premises that the different perspectives commonly share. One of the most important premises shared is the argument that feminist discourse based on female desire, theorized mostly by French feminist critics, entails more liberating potential for both men and women than the earlier discourses, because it offers a possibility of evading the dominating patriarchal discourse produced and elaborated in the preceding two millennia.

In 1949 Simon de Beauvoir published her widely acclaimed book *The Second Sex* in which, adhering to the existential proposition that "existence precedes essence", she states "one is not born woman, but becomes one". In order to answer the question how one becomes a woman, Beauvoir analyzes the means by which woman is constituted as the *other* of man in patriarchal discourse. The following leading figures of the French feminist movement in the second half of the twentieth century – commonly referred as the second wave feminists – aim at finding a means

of subverting the patriarchal discourse to redeem woman from the position of being merely the *other* of man, with the specific emphasis they put on female desire. Helen Cixous, as well as her younger contemporary French feminist critics Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, draw on especially Lacanian psychoanalysis and aim at defining a female space of existence and expression based on Lacan's concepts of the imaginary, the symbolic and *jouissance*. Despite their differences in terminology and approach, all three critics identify the symbolic with the patriarchal discourse and its representational schemes of meaning, and indicate the imaginary to be the realm outside patriarchal meanings and domination. The imaginary is characterized as the female space which is exempt from the effects of the symbolic for two reasons: because it is the period in which the subject – who is not yet constituted as such – is in unmediated relation with the mother; and also because it is the site of the repressed unconscious – consonant with women's suppression by the society. In addition, while all these critics share the frustration with the *phallogocentrism* of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory, they nevertheless utilize the concept of female *jouissance* as the ultimate transgressive experience beyond the symbolic.

Helen Cixous, in her two well-known texts "The Laugh of Medusa" and "Sorties" examine the ways in which the patriarchal society positions woman as the *other* and states that within the patriarchal language women lack the means to express themselves. She observes that through the ages, patriarchal discourse has been founded on the binary opposites which consist of pairs of concepts in hierarchical relation with each other. One of terms in the binary opposite has a priority over the other, and women have always been associated with the other

"negative" term in the pair[69]. She proposes an alternative means of expression for women which she calls *écriture féminine*. *Écriture feminine*, that is feminine writing, involves not only subverting the hierarchically constructed pairs that are the basis of meaning in discourse, but also breaking the structures and upturning the rules in language, and thereby appropriating the fluidity and the polymorphousness of the imaginary[70]. Cixous envisions *écriture féminine* as involving ambivalence toward meaning and avoidance of essentialism, "vertiginous", "overflowing" and "intoxicating" (Sorties, 91). In her writing, she breaks the rules of genres combining fiction, drama and theory, questions subject matter, character, form and style creating a collage of shifting narrators, changing styles and unusual spacing and punctuation.

The necessity of having a female language is also emphasized by Luce Irigaray, who gives a long description of its characteristics in *Speculum of The Other Woman*:

> Turn everything upside down, inside out, back to front. *Rack it with radical convulsions*, carry back, reimport, those crises that her "body" suffers in her impotence to say what disturbs her. Insist also and deliberately upon those *blanks* in discourse which recall the places of her exclusion and which, by their *silent plasticity*, ensures the cohesion, the articulation, the coherent expansion of established forms. Reinscibe them hither and thither *as divergencies*, otherwise and elsewhere than they are expected, in ellipses and eclipses that deconstruct the logical grid of the reader-writer, drive him out of his mind, trouble his vision to the point of incurable diplopia at least. Overthrow syntax by suspending its eternally teleological order, by snipping the wires, cutting the current, breaking the circuits, switching the connections, by modifying continuity, alternation, frequency, intensity. Make it impossible for a while to predict whence, whither, when, how, why … sometimes goes by or goes on: will come, will spread, will reverse, will cease moving. Not by means of growing

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[69] Among the binary opposites she gives are "activity/passivity", "day/night", "culture/nature", and women are associated with the latter term in the pair (Sorties, 63).

[70] It needs to be noted that Cixous does not one to give a conclusive definition of *écriture feminine*, because she wants the retain the fluidity that is its characteristics and therefore does not want to encode a final theory. In "Sorties", she writes, "At the present time, defining a feminine practice of writing is impossible with an impossibility that will continue; for this practice will never be able to be theorized, enclosed, coded, which does not mean it does not exist" (92).

> complexity of the same, of course, but by the irruption of other circuits, by the intervention at times of short-circuits that will disperse, diffract, deflect endlessly, making energy explode sometimes, with no possibility of returning to one single origin. A force that can no longer be channeled according to a given plan/e: a projection from a longer single source, even in the secondary circuits, with retroactive effects. (142-3)

Irigaray also suggests speaking in riddles, allusions, hints and parables even if this renders female speech incomprehensible, which is not a real hindrance since comprehensibility has never been a luxury women could enjoy: "After all, they never have understood" (143). At least, she hopes that maybe in time by listening to this ambiguous and even incomprehensible language "the ear tunes into another music, the voice starts to sing again, the very gaze stops squinting over the signs of auto-representation, and (re)production no longer inevitably amounts to the same and returns to the same forms, with minor variations" (143).

Irigaray argues that by defining woman as the other of man, the present discourse denies woman an independent existence. She asserts that woman needs to be defined as the *other per se*. Because she is completely different from man, and not simply his *other,* she is to be defined in terms belonging solely to her, which is not possible within the male language present. Observing the impossibility of abandoning language altogether, both Cixous and Irigaray aim at producing a fluid feminine language that defies structure and rules, which might be seen as a stylization of the unconscious and the imaginary[71], and thereby evade the symbolic.

Julia Kristeva, on the other hand, does not argue for a uniquely feminine language, but seeks the manifestations of the feminine element, which she calls

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[71] Because unconscious and imaginary belong to the pre-symbolic stage, there is no way of either knowing or representing them in language no matter how the structures and meaning are subverted and modified. The aim of appropriating the language of the unconscious can only be achieved through a stylization of the present language which attempts at imitating dream-logic – with its incoherence, juxtaposed images, overdeterminations and displacements – and the fluidity attributed to the unconscious.

semiotic, in the language of both male and female, that is within the symbolic. *Semiotic* may be thought as corresponding to the pre-Oedipal or the imaginary stage, which is the feminine space. Semiotic is characterized by *chora*, another concept of Kristeva which she borrows from Plato's *Timaeus*. Although the word *chora* means enclosed space or womb in Greek, in Kristeva's use of the term it is neither a sign nor a position but an articulation which is, however, distinct from language (Moi, 12-3); an energy that belongs to the feminine space of the *semiotic*:

> Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are "energy" charges as well as "Psychical" marks, articulate what we call a *chora:* a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated. … [it is] an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases. We differentiate this uncertain and indeterminate *articulation* from a *disposition* that already depends on representation, … the *chora,* as rupture and articulations (rhythm), precedes evidence, verisimilitude, spatiality, and temporality. Our discourse – all discourse – moves with and against the *chora* in the sense that it simultaneously depends upon and refuses it. Although the *chora* can be designated and regulated, it can never be definitively posited: as a result, one can situate the *chora* and, if necessary, lend it a topology, but one can never give it axiomatic form. (*Revolution*, 25)

Like the Lacanian imaginary, semiotic *chora* precedes the symbolic and is repressed as the subject is constituted. Although it is essentially a feminine space, semiotic *chora* is an attribute of the psyche in general, man and woman alike. Hence, in her analysis of literary texts, Kristeva looks for the irruptions of the semiotic *chora*, at moments of crises and subversion for instance, where the semiotic overflows the symbolic, in the texts of both male and female writers. That Kristeva does not argue for the presence of a characteristic unique to women but envisions semiotic as a feminine quality found also in men has been criticized by some feminists.

Despite the fact that she foresees a feminine mode of writing, Helen Cixous also does not differentiate women from men in that they are both suppressed by the representational schemes of meaning in the symbolic. She explains in "Sorties" that neither 'masculinity' not 'femininity' as concepts are the sole reserves of men and women, respectively. She indicates the relation with the *other* to be the real problem at the heart of the question rather than any anatomic or other distinction between the sexes. While the masculine approach to the other is "appropriation" and "annihilation", the feminine approach is "generous" and "giving". She points out motherhood as a privileged experience with the special relation it entails with the *other* which is also the basis of woman's generosity toward the other. She explains that only the experiences of pregnancy and motherhood involve a type of relation with the other in which the woman shares her body with another being and then allows it a distinct subjectivity without feelings of regret:

> We are not going to refuse ourselves the delights of pregnancy, which, moreover, is always dramatized or evaded or cursed in classical texts. …
>
> … It is not only a question of the feminine body's extra resource, this specific power to produce some thing living of which her flesh is the locus, not only a question of transformation of rhythms, exchanges, of relationship to space, of the whole perceptive system, but also of the irreplaceable experience of those moments of stress, of the body's crises, of that work that goes on peacefully for a long time only to burst out in that surpassing moment, the time of childbirth. …
>
> There is a bond between woman's libidinal economy – her *jouissance*, the feminine Imaginary – and her way of self-constituting a subjectivity that splits apart without regret, and without this regretlessness being the equivalent of dying … without the ceaseless summoning of the authority called Ego. (90)

For Cixous, eradicating the perception of the other as a threatening presence is the means to evade the imposition of the symbolic; the discourse that inherently constitutes everything in hierarchical pairs in which the other is aligned with the negative aspect. Motherhood makes such an experience possible despite the risk it

poses to the self[72] both in the imaginary and the symbolic. She further adds that it is this potential of granting the other an independent existence, despite all the risks it poses for the self, which underlies *écriture féminine*. Being the language of the so-called other, the woman, *écriture féminine* entails reflecting this otherness found within the female body[73]. It is a special kind of writing experience which creates a liberating space and this liberation can be achieved through a return to the body, which women had been taught to be ashamed of in history (94). She asserts that "[w]oman must write her body" (94). By writing in a way that allows for the presence of the other and subverting the language that ignored the body, she believes, the system may change, too.

Similarly, Kristeva denotes especially pregnancy as a special condition in which the woman can not be argued to have any subjectivity due to the presence of an *other* within her body: "Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other. And no one is present, within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on. 'It happens but I'm not there.' Motherhood's impossible syllogism" (*Desire*, 237). As Toril Moi observes, for Kristeva, motherhood entails an experience of love which is unconditional and directed toward the eventual separation of these two subjects, despite its difficulty for both parties (18-9. Hence, motherhood implies an ability to allow the other to exist due to the love for the other.

While Irigaray emphasizes the "(re)productive power of the mother, the sex of the woman" as important contributors to the "proliferation of systems" (143), she

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[72] Motherly attachment toward the infant, who unconsciously represents the *phallus* or *objet a* for the mother in psychoanalytical terms, constrains the necessity of letting it become an independent being. Moreover such closeness to an other threatens the coherence of the self for the mother.

[73] It needs to remembered here again that Cixous does not conceive femininity as only an attribute of women. She even suggests that greatness of writers like Shakespeare lies in their ability to "become woman" (98), that is their ability to think outside the symbolic and portray a fluidity in their observations and depictions of characters. Hence, for Cixous, writing requires what she calls *bisexuality*, i.e. being able to accommodate the other within the self.

also focuses on the negative aspects of motherhood, such as the risk of overwhelming the infant with excessive care and thereby impeding its development as a distinct subjectivity. Addressing the mother she writes:

> … You bring me something eat. But you give yourself too much, as if you wanted to fill me all up with what you bring me. … Put less of yourself in me and let me look at you. I'd lie to see you while you are feeding me. … And that you should still remain close to me while I am drinking you. But continue to be on the outside as well. Keep yourself and keep me just as outside, too. Do not swallow yourself up, do not swallow me down in that which flows from you to me. I'd like it so much if we could be there, both of us. So that one does not disappear into the other, or the other into the one. (qtd. in Grosz, 182-3)

This is not only a call for the mother to allow the *other* existence but also for her to retain her existence.

However, both Kristeva and Irigaray also deal with the subject of motherhood as it is constructed in society and via the patriarchal discourse. Kristeva posits that the mother function is not necessarily a feminine attribute but can be fulfilled also by men, an idea she shares with Cixous. She also observes that because women lack the means to express herself, and "the law have been utilized by totalitarian powers of all times to bring women to their side" (*Reader*, 183), mothers act as the perpetrators of the order. Therefore, she emphasizes the necessity to rethink the concept of motherhood. Similarly, Irigaray criticizes the present conception of motherhood as the primary role of a woman and its limiting effect on the lives of women. She also argues that because the infant knows its mother not as a woman but only in relation to her mother function, they cannot conceive a distinct notion of woman. She suggests that this might be overcome both by redistribution of the roles in relation to the infant between men and women, and a reconstruction of the female identity. Hence, both Kristeva and Irigaray, observing the failure in psychoanalysis to explain and rehabilitate the mother-infant relationship – mostly

with the daughter – argue for the necessity of forming a new discourse to reconstitute female identity independent of the negativity entailed within the dominant discourse.

Although they may not differentiate between women and men in their access to the feminine quality, all three critics conceive a peculiarly female relation with the Law occasioned by their sexuality. Cixous observes that while women's sexuality is "infinitely plural various and changing", men's sexuality is static and singular (87). Moreover, she observes that while men adhere to the Law, women, due to their different engagement with *jouissance*, can defy the Law. Hence, like Lacan, she attributes a transgressive potential to *jouissance*. Likewise, Irigaray asserts that female sexuality is

> in fact plural. Plural as culture now wishes to be plural? Plural as the manner in which current texts are written, with very little knowledge of the censorship from which they arise? Indeed, woman's pleasure does not have to choose between clitoral activity and vaginal passivity, for example. The pleasure of the vaginal caress does not have to substitute itself for the pleasure of the clitoral caress. Both contribute irreplaceably to woman's pleasure but they are only two caresses among many to do so. (102)

Like Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva conceive *jouissance* to be outside the symbolic, belonging to the imaginary which is the female space. For them, the "unutterable *jouissance* […] endangers the symbolic resources" (*Reader*, 230). Hence, writing the *jouissance* in its stylized form is always a transgression.

Late twentieth century has witnessed the blurring of the lines between literary and theoretical writing more than it has ever been in the history of Western culture. The question used to be more to denote whether a text was to be considered a piece of literature or, say, a political treatise. However, in contemporary writing, transitions from prose fiction to drama, from drama to feminist theory, form theory to political criticism … occur within the same text. Among the producers of feminist discourse on desire, Cixous and Kristeva also wrote "fictional" narratives which have

become embodiments of their theories. Actually, it has always been difficult to define Cixous' theoretical writing due to its poetic language and intentional subversion of conventional theoretical writing: and her "fictional" works reflect *écriture féminine*'s resistance to being encoded. Kristeva, on the other hand, writes in what may be called a more conventional style, although her narrative conveys her theoretical projections.

As an inevitable consequence of eliminating the line between reality and fiction in theory, it has also become increasingly more difficult to define the interaction between literary theory – which has come to encompass a variety of theories in social sciences – and "fiction" writing. Hence, it has become difficult to denote which comes out of which: fiction form theory, or theory form fiction. Writers have begun to reflect their awareness of the theoretical discourses as well as their literary heritage in their narratives more overtly as a result of their consciousness of the intertextual nature of narratives, through their plays on intertextuality for various reasons. Among the woman writers of the late twentieth century, Kathy Acker is one of the most prominent writers with her subversive style. In her narratives she engages in a dialogic relationship not only with the feminist perspectives on female desire but also the theories of Deleuze and Guattari, Lacan, Bataille as well as many theoreticians and writers.

It is really difficult to summarize any one of Kathy Acker's narratives because they lack a well-defined plot and characterization. For those readers who enjoy reading an elaborate story with acute descriptions of personality of the characters, her narratives are almost unreadable. The kind of reading experience an *Acker-narrative* entails is leaving oneself to the flux of changing narratives and moving from one protagonist to the other, from passages of stories to pieces of plays,

from parodies of extracts from theoretical texts to political criticism, meanwhile trying to solve the puzzles that underlie the pieces narratives juxtaposed in a pastiche. Hence, with their multiplicity of styles, forms and allusions, as well as the disrupted syntax, idiosyncratic use of punctuation and gaps, Kathy Acker's narratives can be classified as perfect examples of *écriture feminine*. In an interview with Lisa Palac, she says "I came out of poetry, not out of prose, so I wasn't concerned with the traditional narrative or even narrative at all. I wasn't interested in telling a story, where you make up one or two fictional characters and tell about their relation to the world" (qtd. in Manners, 102). Hence, her narrative is an embodiment of the poetic expression which Cixous pointed out to be the true expression.

Acker's relation to writing resonates with the notion of "writing from the body" of Cixous and Irigaray. In another interview, with R. U. Sirius for the literary magazine *io*, she says that for her writing is associated with "bodily pleasure" and that she is "looking for what might be called a body language". In the same interview she also says that "writing is basically about time and rhythm", an idea which brings to mind Kristeva's *chora*. She goes so far as to say, perhaps provocatively to mock on the readers' expectations from a writer like her, that "[o]ne thing I do is stick a vibrator up my cunt and start writing – writing from the point of orgasm and losing control of the language and seeing what that's like". This statement, regardless of its being true or not, indicates her intention to evade the symbolic altogether and try to write from the state of *jouissance*, the true outside of language. She explains her intention in writing to be "trying to access what goes through the mind say as you go through orgasm. And it wouldn't even make sense to say one could deconstruct that" (qtd. in Manners, 99). Since the symbolic is open to deconstruction only what lies beyond it cannot be deconstructed, which is *jouissance*. She also explains that in

order to achieve this end and evade any censorship that she might unknowingly exercise upon her writing, she sometimes uses her dreams, the utmost unconscious material. Although there are moments in Acker's narratives where she seems to achieve her ideal of writing from the body rather than the mind and from the imaginary instead of the symbolic, her narratives still convey a very controlled structure of "structurelessness". The seemingly unrelated pieces of narratives juxtaposed under the cover of an Acker book actually serve the purpose of highlighting various aspects of her agenda, which is by no means singular but multiple and even sometimes contradictory. Hence, rather than being "irreconcilable contexts" that "split open and spill their constituents into a formless intertext" as some critics argue (Jacobs, 51), her narratives have a unique structure of their own which conveys multiple meanings through proliferation of narratives, characters and themes.

In two of her books published in the 1980s, *Great Expectations* (1982) and *Don Quixote, which was a dream* (1986), Kathy Acker undertakes the challenging task of rewriting Charles Dickens' and Miguel de Cervantes' novels of the same titles in her own style. In rewriting these acclaimed novels by important male writers, she weaves an intertextual web of narratives. She, thereby, does not simply problematize the question of originality but more importantly engages in a dialogical relationship with both texts by either questioning or explicating the premises inherent in them. Although it is against the *Acker-spirit* to posit a coherent and consistent purpose underlying her writing, it may still be argued that in addition to converting the male point of view by replacing the male protagonists with female ones and concentrating on the stories of the women rather than men, her main goal in this undertaking is to explore the female soul and sexuality and to deconstruct male

desire inherent in these texts by using the transgressive potential of erotic desire both in experience and in theory: In a sense, her intention is to femininize desire that had hitherto been male.

Both in *Great Expectations* and *Don Quixote*, one finds typical Acker with her endlessly changing protagonists, pastiche of various types of writing including letters, play scripts, political observations and recurrent interruptions of narratives, which most often do not continue and come to a conclusive end. Acker selects out certain motifs from the original novels and elaborates on them, foregrounding the woman question. At the beginning of the second part of her *Don Quixote*, which may too simplistically be called the story of a female Don Quixote, she writes:

> BEING DEAD, DON QUIXOTE
> COULD NO LONGER SPEAK.
> BEING BORN INTO AND PART
> OF A MALE WORLD, SHE HAD
> NO SPEECH OF HER OWN. ALL
> SHE COULD DO WAS READ
> MALE TEXTS WHICH WEREN'T
> HERS. (39)

This proclamation which takes place at the beginning of the second part of the narrative also conveys Acker's attitude to language and narrative. All she can do is to read the male texts in her own way to give them her own meaning.

Acker's collage technique and broken syntax as well as her recurrent repetitions of phrases, pronouns, sentences and sometimes whole paragraphs in both narratives is an enactment of the premises of *écriture féminine* as suggested by Irigaray and Cixous. Following their feminist predicament, Acker subverts the linearity of Dickens's *Great Expectations* which is a typical example of nineteenth century *Bildungsroman* tradition. In contrast to the story of a consistently evolving protagonist of a *Bildungsroman*, told in a strict chronology, Acker's *Great*

Expectations defies any temporal and narrative linearity. She uses the term "Bourgeois linear narrative" (qtd. in Manners 99) to express her disdain for such narratives. If one were to make a map of the pieces of the scrambled narratives either by juxtaposing the related ones or indicating the lines of continuity, where there are any, the final structure would give the impression that the narrative is expanding spatially. Irigaray calls any hierarchical structure that is constructed linearly and vertically phallic, characteristic of male language[74] (*Speculum*, 136). Hence, in her attempt to write the language of the body, convey the fluidity of the imaginary and defy the rules of the dominant oppressive language, Acker not only disrupts the narratives, thus making it impossible to follow a story, and upturns the rules of language but also refuses to construct characters. Her narrative oscillates from one character to another whose stories never reach a conclusion.

Acker's *Great Expectations* opens with the parody of the well-known opening paragraph from Dickens' novel:

> My father's name being Pirrip, and my Christian name Philip, my infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Peter. So I called myself Peter, and came to be called Peter.
>
> I give Pirrip as my father's family name on the authority of his tombstone and my sister – Mrs. Joe Gragery, who married the blacksmith. (5)

However, the readers are immediately dispossessed of the safe certitude that what they are about the read is the story of a male protagonist called Peter. What follow are the unhappy childhood memories of a woman, still referred to as Peter, who lived in a female household with her mother and grandmother because her father had left them upon learning that her mother was pregnant – some details of which are

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[74] Deleuze and Guattari suggest any organizational scheme to be like that of a rhizome, expanding in all directions in place of the vertical hierarchical structures of the contemporary discourses and socius. Acker's narratives may also be seen as an enactment of a rhizome-like structure in their spatiality.

autobiographical. This narrative is, nevertheless, soon interrupted with the narrations of pieces of scenes from other characters' lives, and returned to from time to time but it is never concluded.

If one of Acker's motives in rewriting these novels by prominent male writers is to replace their main protagonist with the female ones to recreate their stories from a female perspective, one other important motive is to bring to the foreground the stories of secondary female characters in the original novels. In her *Great Expectations*, of all Dickens' characters, she seems to be mostly troubled by Miss Havisham, in whom Acker sees a suffering woman who has been, in a sense, unable to survive after being abandoned by her fiancée. Miss Havisham suffers so much that in her rotten wedding dress, she has turned herself into a freak. In Freudian terms, she has not been able to conclude her melancholia felt for the lost object of her desire. She has been trapped in her trauma and motivated with the desire to seek vengeance through its repetition with the displacement of woman victim with man. This image of an abandoned woman who cannot cope with life successfully haunts Acker's *Great Expectations* from the start. In the juxtaposed passages, with every new protagonist introduced into the text, the tragedy of the deserted woman or woman threatened with being deserted proliferate. These women are not understood by men; they cannot fit in the male world or manage to become fulfillments of male fantasy. As a gesture of retrieval from life where men prove unable to love, they even commit suicide. Acker explores the female psyche with an acuteness that at times disturbs the feminist critics since she does not close her eyes to the weaknesses of women especially in their relationship with their mothers and more importantly with men.

In the first part of *Great Expectations*, the relationship of the narrator, Peter, with her mother is depicted. Peter has complicated feelings toward her mother:

> Because I am hating my mother I am separating women into virgins or whores rather than believing I can be fertile.
>
> I have no idea how to begin to forgive someone much less my mother. I have no idea where to begin: repression's impossible because it's stupid and I'm a materialist.
>
> …
>
> The day after my mother committed suicide I started to experience a frame. Within this frame time was totally circular because I was being returned to my childhood traumas totally terrifying because now these traumas are totally real: there is no buffer of memory. (6-7)

Peter's differentiation of women into virgins and whores is a reiteration of a thousands of years old male stereotyping of women. Although the narrator turns out to be female, a fact which the reader has not recognized at this point in the narrative, Acker explores both the male and female child's relation to their mother by making the narrator's gender unstable. Regardless of gender, a child's relation to the mother is determinative especially because mother is the source of childhood traumas, especially the initial trauma of separation which lies at the heart of the constitution of identity. The narrator has a problematic relationship to the mother who is not only the natural source but also the instigator of her childhood traumas through her suicide. The narrator's feelings alternate between love and hate, admiration and humiliation. After a digression in narrative – with the depiction of violent scenes of rape and murder from a war – the narrative continues with a detailed delineation of the mother's physical beauty from the eyes of the narrator. However, obviously the trauma of mother's suicide caused her to regress into her childhood, and repression of her hatred for the mother – something she claimed she could not do because she was a "materialist" but happened nevertheless: "My mother is the person I love most. She is my sister. She plays with me. There is no one else in the world except for

some kind of weird father who only partly exists part out of the shadow, and an unimportant torment I call my sister" (10).

In order to overcome her anxiety of separation from the mother and her feeling of guilt because of her death, she imagines to have gone back to the days of her mother-child dyad which could hardly be spoiled by the presence of others. She dreams about the Christmas day they spent playing in the snow and laughing, which, however, does not help. The dream ends with a reminder, the speaker of which cannot be identified: "I stay in this magic snow as long as I can until a voice in my head (me) or my mother says, 'Now you know what this experience is, you have to leave'" (10).

The next brief but pleasant memory/fantasy about the mother is again succeeded by the narrative of the soldier camp where rape and harassment of little girls take place. In these digressions the language becomes more fragmented, almost without any punctuation, giving the impression that these fantasies emerge from the unconscious of the little girl. An indication that these might be the fantasies of the child-narrator is that the following passage about the father ends with the transition of the depiction of the father to the depiction of the soldier: "The father grabs a candle, the curly brownhaired soldier his red mouth rolling around the black meat takes out his knife:" [sic] (12-13).

The cause for the little girl's fantasies about the soldier who implicates the father is the mother's attitude toward him. The mother thinks that the father is a "nobody" and despises him all the time. There are two versions of the reality about the father: the mother thinks that he is a useless idler who drinks at work – which her father gave him – and sleeps at home, whereas the father argues that he does all the work and works more than twelve hours a day. The child is

caught up between the two versions of reality and tends to take her mother's version to be true since it is her she is more attached to. The child is confounded, not knowing whom to side with, but chooses her mother most of the time.

In contrast to the feminist accusation of the patriarchal discourse for the submission of women in society, the introduction of the family seen at the beginning of *Great Expectations* points at the mother for the individuals', especially women's, failure of independence and some of their misperceptive vision of life. The section draws attention to the importance of the mother for the constitution of the character of the child and her definitive role in his/her perception of the world. The child says:

> … I don't perceive my father. My mother is adoration-hatred play. My mother is the world. My mother is my baby. My mother is exactly who she wants to be.
>
> The whole world and consciousness revolves around my mother.
>
> I don't have any idea what my mother's like. So no matter how my mother acts, she's a monster. Everything is a monster. I hate it. I want to run away. I want to escape the Jolly Green Giant. Any other country is beautiful as long as I don't know about it. (14)

The child has totally identified with the mother and therefore cannot develop a sense of reality outside her perception. This relationship between the child and the mother is in line with Irigaray's description of the overwhelming mother who denies the child an independent existence. The child is caught between feelings of love and happiness for being with the mother on the one hand, and the fear of being totally engulfed by the mother on the other. Unable to constitute a distinct identity, the child feels the need to run away to unknown places where she may have her own relations with the world. This part of the narrative ends with hope for the future which will not, however, be realized: "Thus ends the first segment of my life. I am a person of GREAT EXPECTATIONS" (16).

The episode about the mother-child relationship does not only illustrate the threat mothers may pose for their children, especially for their daughters with whom they have a closer, but more problematic bond. The inhibition of constituting the self as a distinct individual in early childhood has its effects on the rest of a woman's life, especially in the form of not being able to maintain existence without the support of an *other*, usually a man, who acts as mother substitute. Having been unable to resolve her relations with the mother successfully, women fail to overcome the consequences of this attachment all her life in the form of separation anxiety and continual need for the love and attention of an *other*.

The rest of the narrative abound with examples of women who try to monopolize the lives of their men, husbands and lovers, to prevent them from leaving them, or examples of women who submit themselves to total annihilation of character and abuse to be loved or who cannot continue with their lives when men leave them. The context changes but the story remains the same. In the following part there is the repetition of a similar relationship between another couple, Wife and Hubbie. They are depicted as an average bourgeois couple who are unable to communicate their true feelings and opinions to each other. The woman is extremely dependent on the man, and therefore, she is afraid that he may leave anytime. Underneath her incessant accusations lies her need for affection. She tries to make the man do what she wants by crying and the man responds in the only way he knows how to show affection, through sex:

> WIFE: You're gonna desert us on Christmas! You Louse! You louse! […] (Starts to sob)
> HUBBIE: Stop it, dear. (Doesn't know what to do when he sees a woman crying. It makes him so helpless.) The children'll see and think something's the matter.
> WIFE: We don't have any children. It's all your fault.

> HUBBIE: It's always my fault. Everything's always my fault. When your dog died when you were four years old it was my fault. […] All I do is work every day! I never say anything about anything! I do exactly what very other American middle-aged man does. Everything's my fault.
> WIFE (soberly): Everythşng IS your fault. (The wife starts to cry again.) You don't love me enough. You don't want me to be a little girl. I'm … mmwah (her hands crawl at one of the lapels of his red-and-black hunting jacket) . I'm a … googoo. Don't you love me? Bobby? Do you love me and be nice to me and don't desert me cause I love you so much?
> HUBBIE (completely bewildered): Of course I love you. (His big strong arms pick her up. He carries her into the bedroom. He puts his cock into her pink rayon panties. He comes. He wants to do what he wants to do.)
> WIFE: You promised and you can't break your promise you'd stay here.
> HUBBIE: Shit. (He fondles his old Winchester. He walks over to one of the large living room windows and sticks the rifle through the window. He shoots down a streetlight that's red.) Goddamn. (20-21)

The whole scene is a Lacanian enactment of phallic *jouissance*, where the two people cannot leave their roles in the symbolic and involve their roles as well as the traces of their childhood traumas, hence their relations with their parents, in their sexual intercourse. The verbal and physical exchange in the whole scene actually conceals ulterior frustrations and feelings that these people are either ignorant of or do not know how to communicate. Since the replaced *objet a* is insufficient to fulfill the underlying desire permanently, as soon as the sexual relation is over, the whole scenario takes off from where it had been left before. Moreover, similar encounters recur each time with a different couple and the final one of the narrative, which takes place in antiquity ends with the woman's suicide. The recurrence of the scene in different contexts indicates its being a characteristic inherent to the nature of female and male relationship.

However, Acker's narratives cannot be reduced to a single position. She immediately negates what she has stated and presents plural points of view. Acker's totally submissive female characters, women who give up all their desires to conform to male desire, and try to overcome their loneliness and weakness through sex, infuriate feminists. Not all of Acker's characters are self-sufficient, sexually liberated

women; nor are all women in real life. On the other hand, a closer look at some of her seemingly submissive characters reveals that Acker's depiction of women who submit completely to the male desire in *Great Expectations* may not in fact be due to surrender but a radical renunciation of the male myth of subjectivity and of the feminist valorization of feminine desire. This renunciation is enacted through a denial of all desire, submission to the other and stepping outside the symbolic in Lacanian terms.

Adhering to a Lacanian notion of desire, Acker conceives of desire as an orientation toward the state of wholeness characteristic of the imaginary but as in essence insatiable since return to that state is impossible. She also realizes that, occasioned by an unconscious desire for *objet a*, it is not the individual who controls desire but it is desire which controls the subject. Hence, this impossible pursuit turns upon itself and works against the individual. Acker writes:

> The mistake is believing that indulgence in desire a decision to follow desire isn't possibly painful. Desire drives everything away: the sky, each building, the enjoyment of a cup of cappuccino. Desire makes the whole body-mind turn on itself and hate itself.
> Desire is Master and Lord. (70)

Because desire is a function of the symbolic and insatiable in nature, it is a constant source of pain:

> Pain comes from askew human perceptions. A person's happy who doesn't give attention to her own desires but always thinks of others. Repressing causes pain. I have no one in this world. Every event is totally separate from every other event. If there are an infinite number of non-relating events, where's the relation that enables pain? (67)

If she can disrupt the cause-and-effect logic inherent in language, manage to perceive events in isolation and reject language totally, it will be possible to avoid pain. However, the outside of language is non-existence, because it is through language

that subjectivity is constituted – although it is also erased at its constitution, as in the Lacanian formula $. Some of Acker's characters in *Great Expectations* dare venture into that realm. In a passage which is overtly an allusion to Pauline Réage's novel *Story of O*, a woman completely lets herself be sexually abused in the most humiliating ways willingly. She is raped, prostituted, forced to oral sex, whipped, her body touched and exposed to anyone regardless of place… Other women whose perceptions are determined by the symbolic are disgusted with O's choice and cannot believe that she can actually want to be treated as such. When the girl at the depilatory parlor sees her body, she is shocked. What shocks her most is not the chain attached to her genitals but the fresh bruises made by whipping on her body:

> What shocks and upsets the girl at the depilatory parlor the following day, more than the irons and the black-and-blue marks on her lower back, are the brand new whip marks. No matter how many times she repeats attempts to explain, if not what her fate (decision) is, at least that she's happy; there is no way of reassuring this girl or allaying her feelings of disgust and terror. No matter how much she thanks these people how polite just like a little girl she acts when she's leaving this parlor where for hours she's lain her legs spread as wide as possible not to get fucked but to get love, it doesn't matter how much money she gives all of them; she feels they're rejecting her rather than her walking out of a business appointment. […]
> Stared at them with eyes opened wide, deaf to human language and dumb. People seeing her, with expressions of horror and contempt turn and flee. (46)

In addition to being an exaggeration of female body's monopolization by men, the above passage delineates how it is the conformation of other people to certain criteria of normalcy rather than their relation to them that determine people's perceptions. No matter how kind O treats them or how much money she gives them, the girls cannot even conceal their disturbance by her. Even her telling them that it is her decision to be treated like this, or that she is happy that way is not enough to make them step outside their perspectives, empathize with her and accept her as she is.

They apply their own criteria of happiness and normalcy to her and define her as an *other*, to whom they cannot grant existence in equal terms with them.

The reaction of men is more interesting though. Some of them treat her simply like a hole, consisting only of a sexual organ, but others, especially young men, are fascinated by her silent acceptance of such a treatment.

> The young men being completely overwhelmed by her strength – her calm existing in such contradiction – tell her they want her to tell them everything. They give themselves over to her as if they're clay, not human. They fuck again and again. They can't get enough fucking. Then they turn on her. They hate her guts because she allowed them to be weak. They want to beat her up. (45)

In opposition to their fictive selves created from verbal illusions and their pursuit of desire that only serves the purpose of concealing the impossibility of its satisfaction; this unnamed woman confronts them with their nothingness. They are first attracted by her but because they cannot coexist with her and maintain their illusions, their attraction gives way to hatred.

Acker repeatedly stresses that it is always the woman's decision to be in this position, which also suggests that having moved outside the symbolic, this woman has come closer to actualizing the real desire that is for a return to the imaginary through renouncing desire in the symbolic more than any other can, and men are reduced to the position of being merely tools for its actualization. It is not that Acker narrates such women to propose their position as a possible choice; what she intends to do is to point out the direction the theories of the self and desire lead when taken to extreme. At such a limit, the only authentic existence appears to be this voiceless desireless domain outside language and discourse.

In both *Great Expectations* and *Don Quixote*, Acker also problematizes the manner in which woman is discursivized in male language as a male fantasy. In the

collaged narratives, there are the recurrent scenes in which a man accuses a woman for failing to live up to his image of her and thereby failing his expectations. The repetition of similar scenes each time with other characters indicates the ordinariness and the frequency of this attitude. The man does not concede to the fact that it was his imagination that conceived her as a woman she was not, but blames the woman for not being his ideal, while the woman tries in vain to explain to him that she has been who she is, not a perfect creature he hoped her to be.

Lacan, in his analysis of courtly love tradition, examines man's psychic processes in love. For him, woman functions as a mirror onto which he projects his narcissistic ideals (*Ethics*, 150-151). Man elevates the woman to the position of the Thing, which is the real but unattainable underlying object-cause of desire but which also does not lend itself to language. He unconsciously imagines woman to be a sublime being, who is in essence inaccessible. His real desire is not to reach the woman but rather to postpone the satisfaction of his desire in order not to confront the fact that no such woman exists[75]. He is either frustrated when the woman fails to live up to his ideal or belittles her to make her and himself believe that she is not that perfect after all when she comes close to his image of perfection. In the dialogue between Clifford and Sarah, in *Great Expectations* one easily observes how Clifford remains indifferent to all the things she tells she had done for him and her appeals to provide the conditions for him to live his life as he wishes, but continues to accuse her for being weak. Ironically, Sarah does not find it that hard to accept this reality about her, because she is better able to discern the discrepancy between one's public and inner self:

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[75] Žižek argues this was what Lacan meant when he pronounced his famous statement that "The Woman does not exist" (Metastasis, 94-96), which infuriated feminists.

> CLIFFORD: You can't take anything rough as I can. You are weaker than me. You're not the woman I expected. You're physically sick all the time.
> SARAH: I AM weak. I never pretended I was different. I act publicly like I'm strong it is just an image and now I do it well I HAVE to survive. It isn't real. That's why I have to be alone so much. I have to be alone so I can be myself. It isn't that I don't love you. I just have to be alone.

From this perspective, Cervantes' character Don Quixote may also be seen as the parody of man who refuses to see the reality about himself and the world not only in his delusions about knighthood but also in his delusions about Dulcinea Del Toboso. Don Quixote is an exaggerated parody of man who, being in love, is captivated by a sublime illusion of the beloved, also according to the courtly love tradition. Although he claims that there is a noble lady called Dulcinea Del Toboso, who is also the ideal unattainable lady of courtly love, Sancho Panza manages to find out that Don Quixote actually created her from an ordinary village girl Aldonza Lorenzo.

Acker's female Don Quixote, on the other hand, has a different problematic. The narrative begins with the traumatic experience of abortion of the female knight, Kathy, the namesake of the writer as in *Crash*. The abortion becomes the cause of madness:

> When she was finally crazy because she was about to have an abortion, she conceived of the most insane idea that any woman can think of. Which is to love. How can a woman love? By loving someone other than herself. She would love another person. By loving another person, she would right every manner of political, social, and individual wrong: she would put herself in those situations so perilous the glory of her name would resound. (9)

The experience of abortion, being in essence an act of exterminating the life of an other, causes Kathy the knight to lose her "sanity" , form which she can recover only by finding love, which in its right form involves feeling for the other without attempting the annihilate the other's existence and independent identity. Along the same lines, Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva envision the experience of loving the *other*

in its *otherness* made possible via motherhood will transform the world on micro and macro levels.

As in *Great Expectations*, the quest of the female Don Quixote is narrated in fragments, being constantly interrupted with a variety of passages. It is not possible to find a causal link in the sequence of the pieces of narratives juxtaposed since Acker's intention is to deconstruct the rationality of male language and its logic based on cause and effect relations, which is one of the main reasons underlying the "lovelessness" of the world. Hence, the pursuit of the female Don Quixote is narrated in an episodic form, each indicating a different aspect of her encounter with the world, with history or with certain institutions in society. Once she sets out to find true love, she is disillusioned with the reality of the world and the lack of love in men. Incapable of maintaining a relationship and unable to feel emotions, men in her world perceive women as consisting of only a sexual organ, and put up with "the woman attached to it". She finds it difficult to cope with this world where rationality reduces everything to mind and eliminates emotion.

The first adventure of the female Don Quixote is a parody of one of the early adventures of the male Don Quixote in Book IV, yet with a grimmer tone. The female Don Quixote comes across a man beating up a young boy. She warns the man that this is not the right way to treat the child and tells the boy to obey his teacher who wants to show him the right way. As is the case with the male Don Quixote, her initial attempts of to teach people love and right behavior end only in the boy's being beaten even more severely. The most striking modification Acker adds to the original tale is its ending: "The boy tried to enjoy the beating because his life couldn't be any other way" (15). In her pessimistic view of the world, Acker continually observes how people adapt themselves to the grim circumstances they cannot change. In the

rest of the narrative, examples from history and contemporary world in which especially women surrender to humiliation and maltreatment for the sake of recognition and with the hope of being loved abound.

Acker makes her knight act upon the misconceptions of women about the means of making themselves loveable. The female Don Quixote seeks happiness and love in sex and marriage, two things women mistakenly regard as the ultimate means to reach happiness:

> Don Quixote decided that the only thing's to be happy. Since the sole reason she ever went out of her house was to fuck, she decided that to be happy's to fuck. She was riding her horse along, in order to fin sex that would not hurt too much. […] Don Quixote verbally dedicated herself to the cause of everlasting love or marriage, which is the most dangerous cause, cause it's no cause at all, then again and again went after the big men. […] Nothing, not even a man, could stop her from going after them. She was inexhaustible indefatigable – a true knight. Nothing could stop her search for love, but death. (23)

Ironically, the proclamation of the knight's fortitude even at the face of death becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy. Acker associates the female pursuit of love with death in various forms and meanings in the rest of the narrative. The first metaphorical death imposed upon women and Acker questions is the kind of metaphorical death Christianity condemns women y denying her existence as a subject and suppressing her sexuality. After she leaves the man beating the boy, the female Don Quixote runs into some monks from the Order of St. Benedict, known for its strict rules. She calls them "lousy stinking shits" and Catholicism "a secret order of assassins". She shouts at their face: "I know you don't love me. I know you don't love women" (24) and goes on to explain to her dog, the substitute for Sancho Panza, how women have been constituted as almost non-existent and sexually dead in language and by religion:

> … Female sexuality has always been denial or virginity.
> 'This's why there's no love in this world, dog. The milk in the breasts of mothers all over this world is dry; the earth is barren; monsters, instead of children, run through our nuclear wastes. In our Bible or The Storehouse of Language, we tired to tell women who they are: The-Loving-Mother-Who-Has-No-Sex-So-Her-Sex-Isn't-A-Crab or The-Woman-Who-Loves-That-Is-Needs Love So Much She Will Let Anything Be Done To Her. But women aren't either of these. A woman is she who stuck the stake through the red Heart of Jesus Christ. By refusing suffering, women have made armies of men into corpses. (27-8)

In order to discover the origins of woman's domination by men, the female Don Quixote decides to look into history. The completely made-up history that follows also has direct allusions to Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. The female Don Quixote says that history is written by Cid Hamete Benengeli – one of the fictive writers of Don Quixote in Cervates's book – and is not reliable both because he is a man and because Arabs are known for their lying. There is a narration of the story of Amadia of Gaul – femininized version of Amadis of Gaul, the famous knight – the supposedly first woman recorded by human history by a female chronicler who is paradoxically "anonymous or dead as women in those days had to be" (30). From her account they learn that Amadia was imprisoned and tortured by her arch enemy Arcalaus. When Amadia asked him to love her, he could find no reason to do so; however, he did not need any reason to beat her. Understanding that the only recognition she can get is by humiliation and beating, Amadia begins to hope that with this only act in which he gives without taking Arcalaus may eventually love her and endures whatever he does to her.

The story of Amadia marks the beginning of female submission to men in the hope for love. Here was the female Don Quixote out for the search of love centuries after her, in an age when love is considered an impossibility and the attempt to find it insanity. Furthermore, paradoxically, both living without love or daring to live it meant death for the women:

> Don Quixote's mentality was so mad, she, maddened, took such mental perceptions to be facts. She had visions:
>
> Her first vision was of human love. A person whom she loved loved her.
>
> Her second vision was of a handsome man. This man told her that he loved more strongly or possessively or madly than she loved. If this is true, then men're more capable of love and vision and life than women. If this true, women can survive. For, as I've said, as soon as woman loves, she is in danger. Why? Because the man for whom she'd do anything because he beats her up makes her almost die: Because she's the one who loves, not him, from not knowing whether or not he loves her, she becomes sick, yet she can't give him up. She loves him so much, she becomes pregnant, but she can't have a child alone. Her dilemma of love or she is her abortion. If a woman insists she can and does love and her living isn't loveless or dead, she dies. So either a woman is dead or she dies. (32-3)

The woman either chooses not to love to avoid suffering and her life is like that of a corpse, devoid of any emotions, or she loves and dies because she totally neglects herself, her desires and her identity, for the sake of her love for the man and thereby ceases to exists. The choice is basically between two deaths: "Either become normal, that is anonymous, or die" (33). In either case women are destined to experience a second death in Lacanian terms. Lacan calls the total submission to the symbolic, through which the subject is erased at the moment of its constitution, a second death – the other one being the biological death. Acker foresees no possible solution for women to exist in the male world in her own terms because she is undeniably constituted by and is a part of it.

In the rest of her *Don Quixote*, rationality and sensuality are opposed. While sensuality and emotions are depicted as desirable, they are nevertheless the source of pain in the world mostly because rationality inherent in male language positions them as such. In one of the juxtaposed narratives, a prince, a type of the ultimate sovereign males in the history is told. The prince is at the end of his years in life and based his whole life on rationality: "Rationality has made me a totally free man and my country a democracy", he says (66). However, his depiction is that of a

man who has been enslaved with his own image and never really enjoyed his life. His feelings of guilt and insecurity hindered him from enjoying his sexuality. His story is followed by contemporary examples especially from the US where rationality caused only suffering and domination of the poor:

> … For reason, on the one hand, signifies the idea of a free, human, social life. On the other hand, reason s the court of judgment of calculation, the instrument of domination, and the means for the greatest exploitation of nature … technological developed for purposes of dominating nature and social reason directed at the means of domination aimed at exercising social and political power. (72)

In all her books, Acker calls blind adherence to the system *lobotomy*, that is accepting its premises without questioning it, which turns human beings into robots. Acker does not posit miraculous answers; however, as seen from the impossible pursuit of Don Quixote, so long as it is not lived in the way of total surrender to the other's desire to be loved, she points at *jouissance* and love as the means to escape the lobotomizing effects of the discourse based on rationality.

Like Lacan Acker also distinguishes between the "*jouissance* of the idiot" and *jouissance* that involves total loss of the self. Concordant with D.H. Lawrence's ideal of reaching *jouissance* simulatneously with the lover, she privileges "coming" at the same with the beloved as opposed to controlling it with considerations that belong to the symbolic: "Peter's sexuality scared for instance he never comes with me cause he's trying not to be in love with me cause he loves his wife or cause maybe he doesn't want to come. Eddie comes, I instantaneously come …" (56). For her, the experience of *jouissance* is one of being "uncentralized" although she realizes that it is also resistant to language and cannot be defined. When one of her nameless protagonists is asked to describe how her body feels pleasure, she cannot tell it although she knows the experience: "There's a definite difference in my

physical being or body between when I'm being fucked and I'm not being fucked. How can I say anything when I'm totally uncentralized or not being fucked?" (56). The statement seems to allude to Lacan's observation about female *jouissance*. Lacan says that women know it when they live it but cannot tell it:

> There is a *jouissance* proper to her, to this 'her' which does not exist and which signifies nothing. There is a *jouissance* proper to her and of which she herself may know nothing, except that she experiences it – that much she does know. She knows it of course whan it happens. […] last time I mentioned women analysts – begging them on our knees to try to tell us about it, well, not a word! We have never managed to get anything out of them. So as best we can, we designate this *jouissance*, vaginal, and talk about the rear pole of the opening of the uterus and other suchlike idiocies.

Some critics, like Elizabeth Grosz[76], criticize Lacan's approach to female sexuality stated in this manner and interpret it as his denigration of women for not knowing how to define their experience although they "live" it. They accuse him of claiming male authority over something that is completely alien to them. However, Lacan's is not a denigration of female *jouissance*. On the contrary, the resistance to language inherent in *jouissance* turns it into an ability Lacan appreciates rather than condescends.

Moreover, Lacan is also in awe of the female possibility of enjoying *jouissance* that is not phallic. Resonating with this idea and adhering to Irigaray's privileging of the multiplicity intrinsic to female sexuality and equating vaginal pleasure with the clitoral, Acker underlines other pleasure zones in the female body. If not as frequently as in her earlier narrative *The Childlike Life of Black Tarantula*, in *Great Expectations* and more so in *Don Quixote*, her characters mention the

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[76] Elizabeth Grosz, in her book *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction* gives the above quoted passage form Lacan's Seminar Encore verbatim but end the quote at the word "vaginal" and interprets it as denigrating women. However, as obvious from the complete quote, what Lacan means is that so long as they are not told and they cannot know themselves they are destined to talk about "idiocies" instead of the "real" thing. What is ironic, on the other hand, is that he should know better that *jouissance* is outside symbolic and hence resistant to language better than anyone else.

immense pleasure they derive form their clitoris: The word "clit" abound in the narrative. Thereby, Acker is not only trying to incorporate into language a four-letter word, in a Lawrencian manner, but also trying to subvert the hegemony of the phallus as a signifier in language. If men have penis that acts as a symbol of power and dominance, women have their "clit" which is completely outside of phallic economy of language and also a source or resistance to it.

As in *Great Expectations*, Acker multiplies her themes in her *Don Quixote*. In *Great Expectations* there was a rewrite of the novel *Story of O*, in *Don Quixote* a lengthy section is devoted to a rewriting of the story of Lulu in Wedekind's plays *The Earth Spirit* and *Pandora's Box*. In Wedekind's plays, Lulu is a woman who used to be a street girl but was later educated by a professor and transformed into a lady, an adorable woman. She is so enchantingly beautiful that she makes men fall in love with her and marry her. Each of her husbands imagines her to be someone different from who she really is. They even call her not with her real name but with names that they think best suit her. In Wedekind's plays woman again functions as the *other* of man, an empty surface or a mirror onto which men want to project their narcissistic ideals. They firmly believe in the illusion they have created and are devastated when they find out the truth about her. Unable to confront the reality that it was his illusion that he fell in love with, one of Lulu's lovers even chooses to commit suicide.

When Acker rewrites the character of Lulu in her own style, she concentrates on Lulu's disillusionment with men. Lulu finds it difficult to understand why men keep trying to transform her into someone she really is not. Although the professor claims that he has rescued her from nothingness and made her someone,

Acker's Lulu realizes that she actually became no one after this transformation; she became foreign to herself and started to see the world through male gaze. She says:

> You don't love me! I am nothing. You have made me nothing. …
> How could I know anything besides you? Is there anything else here? This is your smell. These are your objects: your touch. Everything that I see and touch is yours. My smell is your smell. My touch is to touch you. My eyes cannot see beyond you. (82)

Lulu's attempts at explaining herself and communicating with men also fail because men prove to be self-centered, not in the least interested in what the woman has to say about herself. In a so-called conversation with one of her admirers, the man responds to her demands for communication and affection with total indifference and goes on to talk about his problems.

> Alwa: I've been thinking about the new play.
> Lulu: Why do you have to think about work all the time? Don't you have any feelings?
> Alwa: What I really want is the actors to have freedom. I want the actors to find their freedom. But they won't do this. That's the problem.
> Lulu: I have to talk to you. Personally. I have been waiting for you all day. You're the only person I can talk to because you're my brother.
> Alwa: I have to make my actors take their freedom. You're my actress, Lulu. How can I do this? I know what I want to do, but I can't do it.
> Lulu: I have a problem. (With increasing realization that she can't talk to him because he isn't her brother. That she has no one.) I'm very lonely. (86)

The lack of interest in who women really are and their demands for love and affection is a recurrent theme in almost every piece of narrative included in Acker's *Don Quixote*.

In the concluding part of Lulu's story, she finds herself in a fantasy house where rooms lead to other rooms. Exhausted, Lulu wants to sleep on a canopy which turns out to belong to a bishop's who stayed there earlier. As she lies there, the upper section of the bishop's canopy begins to lower in an attempt to crush her. "With a last attempt of the will" Lulu rolls off the bed and manages to escape from the house.

In the final act, she stands by the ocean thinking to herself: "Now I must find others who are, like me, pirates journeying from place to place, who knowing only change and the true responsibilities that come from such knowing sing to and with each other" (97). Having escaped the imprisoning house of the patriarchy and the bed of Christianity that denies her sexuality, Lulu looks forward to a future in which she will not be forced into a fixed and stable identity but enjoy her feminine fluidity. The end of Lulu's story foreshadows the end of Don Quixote's pursuit of love in the world, which, however, is not as promising as Lulu's.

While causal relations in traditional fiction move toward a conclusion, the texts defy closure in Acker's novels. The final sentence of *Great Expectations* is the opening line of a letter: "Dear Mother," (127), indicating that the book does not end here but instead opens up to other texts; that this text did not start where it did, and does not end where it appears to end. At the end of her *Don Quixote*, the female Don Quixote does not find love, even loses her faith in God in her quest but she does not go back home defeated either, as Cervantes' Don Quixote does. Choosing to forget what she has discovered in her journey – that this is a world devoid of love –, she walks along Rocinante "to the world which lay before [her]" (207). Hence, Acker structurally subverts the authorial intention of narrating a story in its linearity, coherence and closure. Her narratives are fluidly expanding like a rhizome. They emulate the ideal of "becoming" rather than "being" which Cixous and Deleuze point out to be the better mode of existence. Since *becoming* defies closure and coherence, "Acker's fiction … shows that 'coming to be' is full of gaps, folds, and disappearances" and conveys the "strategic decomposition, in reading and writing" required by a "narrative becoming" (Sciolino, 438).

Any study of Kathy Acker's narratives, with their characteristics of pastiche, requires referring to many critics and writers. As stated oftentimes, her stance cannot be reduced to a single proposition. Her multiple viewpoints also enable her to adopt an objectivity that may be lacking in writers who define themselves as feminists. Her narratives lend themselves to a reading with Lacanian psychoanalysis and schizoanalysis of Deleuze and Guattari. However, her narratives engage in an overt dialogic relationship with the perspectives of feminist critics who foreground female body and sexuality. Moreover, because Acker's narrative is centered on the woman question and because she aims at rewriting male texts with a female her works clearly exhibit her desire to femininize male desire.

X. CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the ways in which well-known narratives of erotic desire engaged in a dialogue with the dominant discourses of desire in the periods they were written. Because conceptions of desire changed through the ages, a theoretical framework of desire was necessary to examine both the narratives and the discourses of desire. For this reason, the psychoanalytical approach to desire as theorized by Lacan is chosen as the framework of the study. The reasons for the changing attitudes toward erotic desire in discourse are explained through a Lacanian psychoanalytical approach. It is argued that a process of sublimation and idealization of erotic desire was involved in the constitution of ideals in the idealist philosophies which were prevalent until mid-nineteenth century. Idealist philosophers from Plato to Hegel, in their depictions of the ideal human existence, systematically excluded erotic desire as an obstacle before the attainment of their ideals. In this long period in which desire was subservient to the idealist philosophies, writers of narratives about erotic desire, on the other hand, subverted the philosophers' arguments through the antagonistic relationship they had with these discourses.

However, with Nietzsche's radical critique of metaphysics inherent in idealism, the sublimation of erotic desire for an ideal involved in idealism was unraveled. Nietzsche pointed out the contingency of the professed ideals. He also indicated that the constitution of the philosophical ideals in different periods was effected by the personal prejudices and inclinations of the philosophers. With

Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, erotic desire began to receive the attention it had been denied for more than two millennia. In Lacanian terms, the ideals upheld till then were dispossessed from their status as the Thing. When erotic desire became the center of attention and the repression exerted over it through the idealist discourses began to be alleviated after mid-nineteenth century, this antagonistic attitude gave way to a mutual dialogue and elaboration.

Regardless of their approach the prevalent discourses of their times – antagonistic relationship and mutual dialogue –, narratives of erotic desire had one common feature in all periods: employment of repetition as a narrative tool. In *Satyricon*, Petronius uses not only the repeated sexual acts but also different narrative forms to multiply his themes in the narrative. In *Decameron*, every tale reiterates the theme of the day at least nine times, and illicit sexual acts like fornication and adultery, violation of the vows of celibacy and matrimony abound. In addition to the delineations of Fanny's different affairs with her lovers and experiences as a prostitute, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* consist of the erotic stories of the other young woman Fanny encounters throughout her adventures. The love makings of Connie and Mellors in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* recur each adding to the philosophy based erotic desire Lawrence wants to establish. Almost every character in *Crash* has sex with more than one other character in the novel and sexual acts are repeated at different places. Finally, Acker's narratives *Great Expectations* and *Don Quixote which was a dream* do not only abound with depictions of sexual intercourse but are also repetitions of other narratives and collages of stories which are variants of a theme. Hence, each narrative of erotic desire is constructed upon an underlying principle of repetition, a feature which has multiple implications.

Recurrence of the depictions of sexual intercourse as well as structural and thematic reiterations create a feeling of *excess* which stands in contrast to the centuries old constitution of desire in general and erotic desire in particular upon the concept of *lack*. Beginning with Plato, desire was explained as an orientation toward something the individual does not possess until mid-twentieth century. For more than two thousand years, desire was regarded as an attempt to possess the lacking object – external or internal. The emphasis on *lack* also entailed implications about the possible *excess* that could come about in the endeavor to satisfy desire – by way of indulgence in the desired object. Hence, it was the intention of the philosophers to prescribe what was the desirable and acceptable means of achieving it. Almost without exception, within the dominant discourses, erotic desire and its material object, the body, were conceived of as being in conflict with the ideal object of desire delineated in philosophy. Even when psychoanalysis emerged as the new discourse of desire and concerned itself more with the object-cause of desire, desire was again associated with lack in Freudian and Lacanian approaches. The proneness to excess – an inherent component of desire – was thought to have a productive potential by Deleuze and Guattari who criticized previous discourses, specifically psychoanalysis for associating desire with lack. Putting a special emphasis on female desire, the French feminist critics with joined them in their celebration of desire.

Hence, during the period from antiquity to the mid-nineteenth century, erotic desire was scorned as an obstacle before attaining the sublime ideal of the idealist discourses. On the other hand, narratives of erotic desire subverted these discourses with their structural and thematic excess as well as repetitions of the scenes of satisfying erotic desire, *jouissance*. Petronius undermined Aristotelian ideals of moderation and temperance; Boccaccio refuted the Christian theology based

on the denial of the body; and Cleland subverted the bourgeois morality and rational philosophy advocating the precedence of reason over passions by making their protagonists succumb recurrently to the demands of their bodily desires. On the other hand, Lawrence contributes to the liberation of erotic desire from its position of being a denigrated by-product of dominant discourses by psychoanalysis; Ballard illustrates the celebration of desire in the theory of Deleuze and Guattari; and Acker, through her protagonists' repeated enjoyment of *jouissance*, makes her narratives an embodiment of female desire as argued by Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva.

Repetition is not only a tool that the writers employed to respond to the discourses on desire which either emphasized restraint and moderation or affirmed its excessive potential. Repetition is also a constituent element of desire in Lacanian terms. For Lacan, satisfaction of desire is achieved not through the attainment of its goal, but its repetition. Although Lacan suggests that desire is constituted by lack, the loss of *objet a* with entry into the symbolic, his argument about desire's being essentially insatiable implies that it is prone to repetition. Because the subjects unconsciously avoid the realization of the fact that the object of their desire is merely a substitute of *objet a* and hence unattainable, they persist in their illusions: they continue to desire their replacement of *objet a*, sublimated to the position of the Thing. Thus, the satisfaction of desire in the symbolic is achieved through the reiteration of acts that yield a temporary satisfaction. Hence, inevitably, the scenes of sexual intercourse proliferate in narratives which involve both types of dialogical relationship with the discourses of desire: unable to achieve permanent satisfaction, characters have sex continually in narratives of erotic desire which either contradict or affirm and elaborate the discourses of desire.

Either because writers intend to respond to the discursive constitution of desire in relation to the binary opposites of lack and excess or because it is already an elemental aspect of desire, repetition of scenes of *jouissance* has been the most important aspect of narratives of erotic desire through the ages. These repetitions further emphasize the subversion already inherent in writing about the body and erotic desire which is in itself a reaction to discourse. As French writer and critic Phillip Soller states, "from Sade to Bataille, modern literature is haunted by the idea of bodily writing, *écriture corporelle*, and the body became the fundamental referent of modern literature's violations of discourse" (qtd. in Suleiman, 75). What he says with regard to modern literature can be generalized to include narratives of erotic desire in all ages.

Narratives of erotic desire are narratives of *jouissance*, which is in Lacanian terms the only true transgressive act. Being an aspect of the imaginary, *jouissance* is the sole means for the subject to reach the lost sense of wholeness – a basic characteristic of the imaginary. *Jouissance* is transgressive because it gives the subject the chance to step outside the symbolic and evade its schemes of meaning that constitute, determine and delimit the individual. Not a part of the symbolic, *jouissance* is a reflection of the language of the body. Therefore, the ultimate resistance to discourse is possible by writing the *jouissance*. However, the paradox here is the fact that belonging to the imaginary, the re-representational stage, *jouissance* may be known but cannot be represented as it is in language. Hence, in their narrations of *jouissance* the writers undertake only a stylization of *jouissance*, an artistic representation of an impossibility, through which they engage in a dialogical relationship with the discourses of desire.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, in the narratives of erotic desire, through their stylizations of *jouissance*, writers replace sublime ideals of the dominant discourses with worldly erotic desire for the human body. In antiquity, Petronius in his *Satyricon*, juxtaposes the Platonic ideal type of *eros*, love for the knowledge the ideas, and the Aristotelian ethical ideal of leading a life based on temperance and moderation. Encolpius and his friends embody every bodily excess both Plato and Aristotle condemn, whereby Petronius affirms life and erotic desire instead of postponing happiness to an afterworld. Likewise, Boccacio's tales of adultery and fornication in *Decameron* subvert the Christian love of God, *agape*, replacing it with the natural desire for the body of the other, while also undermining male power and authority. The explicit depictions of *jouissance* experienced by Fanny and other women in Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* ridicule bourgeois morality, question the current definitions of realism much discussed in literary circles at the time, and more importantly attenuate the importance attributed to rational thinking in the eighteenth century.

As Lacan argues, transgression as an act relies on the presence of the Law for its existence. So long as the Law prohibiting *jouissance* remains intact, narratives of *jouissance* maintain their trangressive power against the dominant discourse. However, after mid-century, the denigration of erotic desire gave way to the recognition of its importance as an aspect of human existence. Hence, gradually a discourse of desire *per se* emerged: psychoanalysis. While the dominant social and political discourses maintained their problematic relation with the concept of erotic desire, writers began to contributed to the formation of discourses of desire by elaborating on its premises, as seen in the examples of Lawrence, Ballard and Acker. Despite Lawrence's professed discontent with Freudian psychoanalytical theory, in

Lady Chatterley's Lover, where he overtly expresses his philosophy based on liberation of erotic desire, he makes use of psychoanalytical insights in the creation of this characters. Ballard's *Crash*, on the other hand, lends itself to a reading along the lines of Deleuze and Guattari's theories based on the micropolitics of desire. The characters in *Crash* liberate themselves through the celebration of erotic desire, which manifests itself in the form of autoeroticism in its literal and metaphorical sense. Finally, while responding to various perspectives on erotic desire, Acker's narratives *Great Expectations* and *Don Quixote* convey the writer's engagement with the woman question and the notion of female sexuality. Epitomes of *écriture féminine*, her narratives examine the role and meaning of specifically female sexual desire through the subversion of male narratives. On the one hand, the stylizations of *jouissance* in the twentieth century narratives of erotic desire have a dialogical relationship based on elaboration of the prevalent discourse of desire. On the other hand, these narratives continue to be transgressive against the Law constituted by the dominant social and political discourse which, despite some degree of liberation, preserves its conservative stance towards erotic desire.

In his seminars Lacan frequently underlined the affinity between the ways in which desire and language are constituted in the development of the subject. The entry into the symbolic stage and the loss of the imaginary has two consequences for the subjects: they begin to desire the replacement of the *objet a*, which can never provide true satisfaction of the unconscious desire, and they begin to use language which can never represent the Real of the imaginary in its totality. Hence, the subject is destined to suffice with the poor copies of the lost objects of the imaginary. The *objet a* remains inaccessible and the Real remains "irrepresentable": The object of desire in the symbolic remains related to the *objet a* but falls short of the aim of

corresponding to it totally; language insufficiently represents the Real and a hard kernel always remains. Therefore, desire is never satiable and meaning is never complete. This double bind has led to the endless production of discourses and narratives of desire for centuries. Desires have neither been satisfied and the pursuit abandoned, nor has meaning been completed and delineations could cease. Likewise, in this study neither the desire to explore the subject of desire could be fully achieved, nor can there be a claim for a complete meaning – an impossible endeavor in language.

It would be impossible to include all the discourses that relate to desire within the scope of this study. Hence, this study has been limited to the dominant discourses of desire, selected from periods where there have been momentous changes in the *episteme*. Narratives of erotic desire discussed are chosen among the best known examples of the periods and forms. The scope has been limited to hetero-normative sexuality.

Far from being complete, this study lends itself to future studies of both discourses of desire and narratives of desire. The perspective could be widened to include queer theory or literatures of other cultures from other parts of the world. Such a study could serve as a test of the validity of contemporary discourses of desire which have a claim to universality. In addition, the framework could be chosen from theories other than psychoanalysis, such as phenomenology. With the exception of Acker, all the narratives of erotic desire in this study were written by male writers. In Acker's case, the emphasis was on the dialogue her narratives had with the discourses of desire produced by female critics. It would also be interesting to examine narratives by female writers and see whether they engage in a dialogue with discourse in a way different from the male writers.

Hence, just like its subject matter, this thesis is open to excess and multiplication through repetitions by other studies with different emphases.

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