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Figuring reticence

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FIGURING RETICENCE

by

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

My object in this study is the elucidation of an underlying principle in the organization of narrative voices and structures: the idea, found in certain fictional texts, that specific signs and signals of reticence--gaps, deflections and interruptions in a supposed flow of speech--set up a mode of reading and a way in which speech is to be acknowledged and understood (or refused entry to understanding), both by characters within the fictional world and by the interpretative reader. The stress in this mode of attention is on slippages from positive to negative, from secret to revelation and from hesitation or denial to assertion. The texts that invite reading in this manner come together as a category through their focus on narrative conventions that instruct the reader in attending to these meaningful shifts.

In choosing to read and articulate the various strategies of reticence within literary or film texts, I consider that literary analysis can appropriately integrate perceptions from psychoanalysis, since psychoanalysis gives us ways in which to track and weigh what is not explicitly present in verbal articulation because of withholdings and repressions.

Within the psychoanalytic context (and within the literary work), any implied lack can be contextualized as part of a search for integration and coherence. The focus is thus placed on what is perceived but not self-evident, or known but only obliquely delineated by the expressive patternings.

In seeking to describe in depth the operations of three "reticent fictions," Goethe's Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Bronte's Villette, and Bresson's Une femme douce, I am applying the term "reticent" to the particular narrative strategies in these works through which characters in fictions use (or are manipulated by) the expectations of dialogue to efface or erase themselves from audibility, yet at the same time establish the parameters of speech by their very acts of disappearance. That which is not directly spoken of, on the level of character, augments our sense of the complexity and stature of the character enacting the withholding. In Villette, for example, Lucy Snowe's incapacity to show herself as colorful and as an object worthy of being seen is an incapacity that is paradoxically articulated in minute detail through a highly elaborated narrative consciousness.

Similarly, that which is not directly spoken of, on the level of narration (an alluded to but not explained plot element or time shift, for example) gives the reader a complex sense of interreferentiality

beneath the continuous flow of event. Strategies of reticence keep returning us to the multiplicity of the text, and so suggest continued possibilities for further articulation. They can also, however, suggest a level of subversion of what has been articulated, particularly when the narrative rewrites what we have taken to be the "ongoing history" within the story. Thus, in enlarging our sense both of character and narration, these signals of reticence, in turn, impinge upon the text's language in several ways.

The first and most obvious of the signs of reticence is thematic: characters state the fact of their keeping secrets from others, or discuss their own reticence about certain subjects, or actively seek and/or refuse our permission--or other characters' permission, to avoid discussing them. Perhaps the ultimate example of this "secret" is Lucy's Snowe's "empty" confession of mere loneliness to a Catholic priest in Villette. She is assumed by the priest to be bearing a secret; the fact that she manifestly leaves it unspoken stamps her as an object of pursuit. The second level on which these gaps operate is noetic: hiatuses in the text can signal how little is known in the fictional present about something that someone--narrator or character within the work--unknowingly or knowingly knows. Unlike dramatic irony, reticent knowledge does not necessarily create distance, for the

domain of reticence is suggestion, not perspective. For example, again in Villette, some of these gaps appear in Lucy Snowe's repeated allusions to an irrecoverable happy past ("Oh, my childhood!") about which she "could feel," yet about which so much could be told that it must be left unsaid. Of the time when Lucy Snowe "belonged," we hear little, and nothing specific, in the novel. As I discuss in the chapter on Villette, these moments of hiatus have a structural function in the narrative as well, adding another facet to the narrator's or reader's perspectives, or shifting to another register of discourse or layer of complexity.

The last type of signalings of reticence pertains to the symbolic level of narration, or, more precisely, to the narrative manipulation of the text's implied symbolism. In this type, recurring images and metaphors that accrue certain resonances make us realize at some point in the narrative that we did not fully grasp their implications or use. For example, in Goethe's tale, Eduard's initial discourse about the lakes and about his plans to join them to each other seems benign. Subtly suggested within this discourse, however, is the potential of these bodies of water to menace and close over life rather than generate it. From an initial symbol of tranquility they become an unpredictable source of disorder. The dam that gives

way and causes a near-drowning appears in the first book; the child sucumbs to the disorder and drowns in the second book's intensification of the lakes' symbolic power.

Thus, the inferred presences given through narrative signals of effacement shape the thematics of a text, our assumptions about its duplicities or honesties of language, the nature of its episodic intervals and its structures of images and metaphors.

In exploring the operations of reticent fictions, there is at least one perspective that lies apart from my focus. I do not have in mind presenting the questions of reticence as coincident with the exposures of Beckett's "I open...and I close," or the dark vortices of post-modern fiction, so exemplified in Handke's parabolas of the non-communicants:

> Holding my plate on my lap, I ate in the kitchen, which was too small for a table. A colony of daddy long-legs adhered to the walls, clinging to the grainy lime-stone with their spindly legs, which suggested clock hands. Unceasingly, they swung to and fro, giving the whole kitchen the air of a clock-maker's workshop, filled with pendulums and silent ticking. From time to time the clocks shifted their position, or else one would stand long-legged over another, the two of them swinging together. Down on the tile floor, several of the evidently short-lived creatures lay on their backs, radial forms no longer--some with legs folded in dying, but quivering violently; others, already dead, had twined their legs tightly around their already dried-out bodies: mummylike balls, visibly gathering dust. The gaps left by the fallen were immediately taken by others, evidently newborn, brighter in color than the rest and conspicuously smaller, which joined

> at once in the general ticking. These creatures are known to me from excavation sites, where they often keep those working in the galleries company with their pendular motion. Here in my place they serve as household pets, as does the unidentified insect inside the ball of sand on my desk; by making me look up and pause in my work, they, like sundials, help me to "have time." If it was possible in the past to worship (or at least to see) the sun in beetles, why not in these harmless spiders that spin no webs? (Across 20)

I have quoted this passage at length (though not in full) partly in order to avoid the dessication of language it painfully, and brilliantly, "worships." There is a temptation to examine Handke's immense, almost uncrossable thresholds, for his text shows one of the destinations of the fictional reticences I do want to examine. But I am not discussing Handke's strategy, tone or focus because of its peculiar familiarity to our contemporary ironies and ways of distancing (and because a denial of related discontiguities has its place in discussing reticence). The rhythms of Handke's isolation of his subject have a structure and a resonance we perhaps assume as the condition of those ironies that so fully inhabit us. And perhaps, also, his elaboration of essential negations of being belongs to a by-now large class of negations which we rely upon in stating, understanding, claiming, resolving and fixing perception.

The notion of reticence I have in mind is, rather, an older one linked to a concept of restraint, whether

seen as an enhancement in the tradition of decorum in style, or as a signal of the ideal or the sublime, however attenuated the embodiment might be. Reticence in the works I will be examining is a strategy for approaching the object of desire--whether it be aesthetic and moral perfection, the possibility of recognition by an other, or a spiritual reality.

Reticent fictions thus empower the reader in an unparalleled way. Such fictions enact the paradox that, though reticence is perceived as an absence, it is an absence that generates meaning, and that therefore is a particularly creative strategy of telling. We are accustomed to reticence as a mode of personal experience and deportment. In daily discourse, however, we are not always provided with sufficient pause, distance or clairvoyance to catch the patterns of its operation in our own dialogue with others. (This is, of course, an area of potential privilege in psychoanalysis.)

An act of reading, however, allows us a perspective on the nature of pause and pattern, and implies the active presence of something more, a something more that we construct as we go along in the act of reading and through which we are forced to elaborate a dimension of the not quite, or not yet, or so different it can never be realized (as silence once signaled the transcendent) Clearly, this perspective can never be

total, for it is in the nature of reticent fictions to interrupt a clear-cut trajectory, and in different ways to still, deflect or distort, even "steal" from what is being mentioned in the fictional present. To search out those reticent strategies, however, is not merely to point to the distortions, whether willed or succumbed to, but to enter the heurmeneutic circle in a manner particularly energized by our own reinterpretative constructs as readers. A sequence of well-known passages from George Eliot's Middlemarch richly illustrates the point:

> "Not that this inward amazement of Dorothea's was anything very exceptional: many souls in their young nudity are tumbled out among incongruities and left to 'find their feet' among them....Some discouragement, some faintness of heart at the new real future which replaces the imaginary, is not unusual, and we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity." (Middlemarch 226; ch. 20)

Keeping its balance within the repertoires of possibility for understanding that it suggests, this passage establishes the narrator's ironic distance from both the tale and characterization at hand and from the human condition in general. Further, it implies that this world is one where it would be easy to slip from

tragedy to cynicism, from listening to deafness. Yet Dorothea's predicament, Eliot tells us, is one worth paying attention to, for Eliot's strategy, even when she negates her expectation of it, is to cause her reader "to be deeply moved by what is not unusual." This statement has its own ironies: by its scope and subject matter, her novel exercises its novelistic prerogatives and stakes out its territory in "what is not unusual"; at the same time, however, it negates its own disclaimer of uniqueness by so particularizing the objects of scrutiny that they retain their unique configuration in memory.

In a passage about the ruins of Rome just preceding the one quoted above, we find another image that fits both Dorothea's consciousness and the author's sense of her function as writer: "Forms both pale and glowing took possession of her young sense, and fixed themselves in her memory even when she was not thinking of them, preparing strange associations which remained through her after-years." We can call this a subsuming of an overall strategy in the immediate, concrete references of fiction (here the forms referred to are "the vast wreck of ambitious ideals, sensual and spiritual" of Rome), for Eliot's "forms both pale and glowing" do take possession of the reader. Her fineness of perception in portraying this subtle process allows us to absorb its language without knowing the

degree to which we have done so. Thus combining a "halo of potential presences" with the flickering moments of negation, Eliot suggests through her own artistic reticence a wealth of resonance that enlarges each statement by its absent presences.

All fictional texts do, of course, create a dialogue between spoken and unspoken presences by the mere fact of authorial selection, and this is part of the imaginative pleasure of fiction writ large. However, when interpreting a reticent fiction, the deformation of what is spoken in the text by what is unspoken and of what is unspoken by what is spoken presents a special problem, for from this particular intricacy of contrasting dialogues, the work derives its primary identity. I deal with this problem in the Bresson text, which was chosen in order to distill an analysis of the operations of a work that praises and uses gesture to heighten reticence, enacts it to a very high degree, and yet has a fuller text (and perhaps another withholding) than the one we initially see. Its "fuller text" has to do not only with the degree of instruction Bresson includes in his films (how, that is, to "see" a film) or with his embeddings of literary texts, but with his formal demands that the viewer engage in a labor of the spirit to find an accord with the ineffable as he frames it.

Insistently, his work is designed to depend on our resistance and ultimate acquiescence to his perspec-

tive. It assigns to a spiritual dimension the role that Benjamin Constant's Adolphe (to whose lineage Bresson's film belongs) assigns to its portrait of déchirements. To promote reticence as a mode of speech is to promote reflection and the severer forms of revery as means of superseding the literal immediacy of one's own culture. One engages that culture, but does so most fully through the means given by forms of inwardness. In enacting a subversion of the "normal" values of introversion and extroversion, reticent characters and their fictions pertinaciously seem to refuse interpretative unmaskings, and their narrators seem to derive a certain satisfaction (if not resolution) from their abiity to do so.

As even Bresson's film texts would indicate, then, to study reticence is to study the paradoxes of those symbolic elements and speech characteristics we assign to the category of negation, such as the dialogues of hiatus following upon statements of expectation. One thinks of Woolf's "No, not tomorrow, she said, but soon, she promised him; the next fine day," and of how the framing of the promise to go to the lighthouse creates an expectation both of fulfillment and of deferral. The textual signals of reticence are often invitingly ambiguous, making the not-quite and the unspoken appear as a gateway to interpretation.

As I have suggested, in discussing the way that reticence determines articulation, I will, where it is

feasible, sometimes rely on the terminology and methodology of psychoanalysis as a means of providing insight into the organization of narratives and their metaphors. Further, the conceptual layerings which constitute psychoanalytic understanding and interpretation of such processes as inhibition, repression and negation define the conditions under which a psychoanalytic reading of texts is possible and articulate a range of registers susceptible to analysis. However, as I suggest below and elaborate in Chapter 5, there is an important difference between reading the semiotics of gaps within a text and understanding the open-ended nature of those signals of absence within the context of the analytic session. This difference makes it as tempting as it is suspect to map literary interpretation by means of the categories of psychoanalysis. Indeed, psychoanalysis is used here more for its potential to scan for the junctures of withholding within the text and illuminate their presences, than as a coherent or "pure" interpretative model, analogous to the critic's choice of reading model. Used in this "scanning" way, however, psychoanalysis does hold out a particular critical advantage in its ability to alert us to certain modes of attending to the text's signals.

* * * * *

Although it would seem that reticence is a particularly "modern" topic salient in the nineteenth- and

twentieth-century models I have chosen for my analysis, it must be recalled that reticence has figured distinctively in many earlier works. For example, in Homer, the ability to withhold speech appears rarely, yet can strikingly signal power, wisdom, and the allied will and presence of the gods. Such is the case with Odysseus' wiliness, and his withholdings of speech to control the effect of his presence as well as his words. Inner monologues may precede or take the place of crucial dialogue or decisive action, as when Hektor debates within himself whether or not to surrender before doing battle with Akhilleus. It can also be the case that silence or suppression of speech signals loss of courage---thumos fails; the breath for speech fades as the gods abandon men to their fates. When enchanted by Kirke, men lose human voice as they lose their bodily integrity.

In the Iliad, more concerned as it is with the human heroic and the divine than with the Odyssey's emphasis on the human and animal, divine and demonic dimensions of the domestic, the positive power of reticence is an unambiguous messsage. On one level of its dialogues, the poem could be read as a psychological model of speech or gesture withheld as a necessary step in the resolution of inner dissonance and outward contention. The entire course of the epic's action, from the initial "Anger be now your song," to the

poem's terminal epithet of taming, is framed by its sequencing of moments of "right restraint." The first moment depicts Athêna's seizing of Akhilleus by the hair, an "externalized" act forcing Akhilleus' suppression of his murderous rage at Agamémnon in Book I; in the language of epic, that suppression is a deferral. Useful rage must be enacted in the public arena of battle, but carefully controlled when questions of hierarchy are at issue. This first lesson in conscious restraint is counterbalanced by the climactic turns in Book XXIV. When Akhilleus has too long transgressed the will of Apollo by dragging Hektor's corpse around the tomb of Patróklos in unassuaged anger, he is constrained by Zeus to allow ransoming the body. Guided by Hermês, Priam appears before Akhilleus to kiss "the hands of wrath that killed his sons" and join with him in a communion of grief. But refusing to sit down "while Hektor lies in your camp uncared for," Priam demands the body and renews the rage of Akhilleus, who then, in a culminating moment, speaks with the knowledge of what must be withheld:

> Akhilleus, the great runner, frowned and
> eyed him under his brows:
> "Do not vex me, sir," he said,
> "I have intended, in my own good time,
> to yield up Hektor to you....
> Therefore <u>let me be</u>.
> Sting my sore heart again, and even here,
> under my own roof, suppliant though you are,
> I may not spare you, sir, but trample on
> the express command of Zeus!"
> (Fitzgerald 586)

Here the restraint has been completely internalized, transformed from the impulse to direct physical violence into a threat designed to avert such violence. Both more dramatically impressive and more psychologically credible than "divine" manipulation, the transformation of Akhilleus' character and embodiment of the heroic occurs through his acceptance of language and its suggestive power to mediate his rage. Reticence of gesture is accompanied by referring in speech to what is being withheld. Reticence of speech now passes to Priam, who must obey the silent fullness of Akhilleus' "sore heart." Their dialogue is a narrative fulfillment that signals the completion of mutual understanding of restraint.

Later, in Classical tragedy, forms of speechlessness, whether stemming from a withholding by desire or external constraint, and with varying appearances of ambiguity, take on further complexities of meaning, as shown in many familiar scenes. In Aeschylus' tragedy of the enchained hero, Prometheus' deliberate refusal to reveal his knowledge of the future is the source of his power. His choice of reticence leads to the eloquence of his speech. In the same play, Io is allowed speech, but must flee from her own telling, while the chorus claims rights to speech, though speech without understanding. Cassandra's speech in the Agammemnon almost parodies the forced reticence of her powerless-

ness and submission, for no matter how persuasive and compelling her utterances, they must not, cannot be heard as persuasive by their intended audience within the world of her own drama. She speaks to history and the audience of the play, auditors forbidden to bear witness. Euripides' Bacchae shows Agave stripped of the language of motherhood, all tenderness of speech suppressed. Her frenzy delivers her to a total negation of any separate, identifiable voice.

Chertok and de Saussure, in their history of psychoanalysis (194), point out the emphasis in antiquity on dreams and memories, forgotten and lying just beyond the threshold of consciousness (and relating to hypnosis and the experience of "états seconds," ideas perhaps older, though not always as demonically construed, as the idea of possession). The Odyssey, for example, has numerous instances of the gods bringing forgetfulness, for good or ill, to men in their confusion. But forgetfulness, like signs of repression, is substantive for the Greeks; it is an act, even a gift of the gods. Thus, there is an implicit connection between memory and conscience on the one hand, and repression and the lapse of consciousness on the other, in the metaphor of Penelope's silent, endlessly unravelled weaving, which must justify to her suitors her apparent reluctance to choose a new husband.

The idea of speech withheld is frequently related to arguments on the worth of silence. While some of

the examples above may suggest an inability to bring to fruition, I draw on critical discussions of the role of silence that tend to assign it positive value--it is full, not bereft; potent, not attenuated; radical, not indeterminate. When silence is apodeictic, it acts to identify, and particularizes. In literature, the bearer of silence has a voice; figures of reticence, whether rhetorical figures, tropes, gestures of negation or characters per se, assert by implied forms of prominence.

The first work in my study, Die Wahlverwandtschaften, provides a model of reticence through elusiveness, a drawing on into the terms of a crux that will not be solved--a portrayal of dissolution inscribed in a perfect serenity of expression. Villette presents a powerful narrative voice dislocating its power not only through a clear thematic of denial ("...it was better to be stoical"), but through complications of the strategies of paradox, inversion and hyperbole in disclaiming. Bresson's film aggressively fragments and segregates moments of perception, making it difficult to either see the whole at any one moment or to take the part as entirely representative of the whole. The fullness of silence is central in all of these works, as Auchard explains is the case for Henry James:

> By silence I primarily mean just that, the absence of talk, the holding back of words--

> the early refusal of Christopher Newman to expose the Bellegardes, Maggie Verver's much later refusal to tell what she knows of the affairs which threaten her family. But as a complex symbolist issue, silence, as structure, relates to other "negated" forces in the fiction, those which move against obvious statement, against presences, against things, against the assertions of positivism. Even ghosts, as visitations which live as absences, become part of the progress of Henry James away from phenomena and the word. The vacant, the void, the blank, and the dead all participate in the pressure of silence, supplying the furniture of an increasingly quiet, increasingly anti-materialistic consciousness." (3)

This Jamesean reading of disembodied presences and of the psychic pressures they bring to bear on consciousness is implicit in the fictions I consider, although differently explicit in the exposition of their central tensions.

Another approach to the weight of silence gives a very different paradigm of reticent figuration. Michael Baxandall, in his Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy, discusses the stages of the Virgin's coming to consciousness as those stages are depicted in Renaissance paintings and described in sermons of the period. Baxandall's analysis might well serve as an anatomy of the concept of reticence, because he chooses a central example of iconographic representation that fuses verbal and visual language. We follow Mary's trajectory of inwardness as she refuses, or, alternatively, loses, language in striving to contain the overwhelming mystery that has overtaken

her. Baxandall cites the sermon of a contemporary popular preacher, Fra Roberto Caracciolo de Lecce, observing that "Such sermons were a very thorough emotional categorization of the [holy] stories, closely tied to the physical, and thus also visual, embodiment of the mysteries. The preacher and painter were repetiteur to each other." (49) In his sermon on the Annunciation, Fra Roberto elaborates the Angelic Colloquy as one of three mysteries central to the event, and the one that most feelingly illuminates the states of mind and spirit through which the Virgin passes in the moments preceding the conception of Christ. The five conditions he discusses, (and whose corresponding gestures can be appropriately 'read' by a suitably educated viewer) are as follows:

> The third mystery of the Annunciation is called Angelic Colloquy; it comprises five Laudable Conditions of the Blessed Virgin:
>
> 1. Conturbatio--Disquiet
> 2. Cogitatio--Reflection
> 3. Interrogatio--Inquiry
> 4. Humiliatio--Submission
> 5. Meritatio--Merit

As the sermon continues, we learn that the first four of these conditions refer to Mary's inward reflections. Initially, she is "disquieted" not by the "fact of the Angel's apparition so much as at the lofty and grand salutation...at which she in her humility was astonished and amazed." Next, her "reflection" upon the nature of this salutation "shows the prudence of the most Holy Virgin." The inquiry goes out to the

angel, then back to her own understanding, "Then said Mary unto the angel, 'How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?'... 'seeing I have the firm resolve, inspired by God and confirmed by my own will, never to know a man?'" The fourth condition, visually expressed in the familiar depiction of Mary kneeling with bent head and arms crossed before her, silences her questioning and makes superfluous the idea of a separate will: "Be it unto me according to thy word." Merit, in the form of "Christ, God incarnate, in her womb" ends the colloquy and signals the Angel's absence or imminent departure.

In this sequence, the pressure of inward knowledge and the fear of what is incomprehensible with regard to anatomy or reason bring reticence to bear on the conventions of speech in ways that are both symbolic and descriptive. That is, it seems to be Mary's task to attempt an impossible outward displacement of knowledge in her unequally matched struggle to remain apart from the sense of the word. Once all avenues of displacement have been exhausted, her submission of body and spirit and speech is complete. The angel's task of bringing Mary to consciousness is over; conception of Christ's being occurs at the moment of full understanding of the word of God. Word and being achieve simultaneity and therefore an equal state of existence, with articulation having so powerfully generative a

force that it overcomes the desire to be reticent (the refusal to hear and conceive embodied in the first three stages). The significance of a concept of reticence is not only statement but inquiry, assertion and confusion as well, as these first stages would indicate. Mary as the paradigm of limited humanity is paradoxically forced to deal with too much or too little of something inextricably linked to speech but not to language itself.

That in paintings of the Annunciation reticence is demonstrated as gesture on behalf of the word is appropriate to my subject, for the depiction of how speech is withheld, how silence speaks, and how, furthermore, we perhaps dare not know speakingly, informs and forms the central metaphors and even the explicit subjects of very different kinds of art works. It is tenor as well as vehicle. Especially given the stress on subjectivity in the nineteenth-century novel, the relation of inwardness and expression through speech is often at the center of the narrative. I will endeavor in this study to map out the ways reticence marks, defines and controls very different narratives, texts in which to write, to speak, to portray or to mean implies and depends upon the significatory presence of the unstated.

* * * * *

Narrative is ostensibly sequence taking place in time, and certainly nineteenth-century fictions typi-

cally claim real time as their external field of action, but the notion of experience in the (Freudian) unconscious is timeless, and infinitely divisible. Reflecting these properties of text and mind, the languages (for there are many) of psychoanalysis interweave with discourses of literary analysis. In psychoanalysis, as in literary criticism, selected topoi and the ways in which they are elaborated or backgrounded tell us much about what Roman Jakobson, in his discussion of "Linguistics and Poetics," calls the "axis of selection." We depend upon that axis, and superimposed upon it, a second "axis of combination"--the way in which topics are arranged--for our accounts of narrative coherence as well as style (358).

A more purely literary way of reading a text might give relatively less attention to the first of these--for the topics selected are often taken as givens, points of departure rather than metaphors in their own right. However, to do so neglects what Jakobson discusses so fully in the context of poetry--the "halo of potential presences" that lends the poetic text its metaphorical density. Psychoanalysis works by paying attention to the relation between "present" (asserted) and "absent" (suggested, e.g through repression, displacement, negation, inhibition, etc.) content, style and form of presentation. In this way, psychoanalytic understanding permits a discussion of reticence by

privileging both the axis of selection and its host of unproclaimed "potential presences." In these reticent fictions, what is privileged is at the same time concealed and protected through its artistic distortion.

In her introduction to Literature and Psychoanalysis, Shoshana Felman has attempted to set up an expandable framework for the optimal relationship of psychoanalytic and literary tools of analysis. As she describes it:

> The notion of application [i.e., applying psychoanalysis to interpretations of literary texts] would be replaced by the radically different notion of implication: bringing analytical questions to bear upon literary questions, involving psychoanalysis in the scene of literary analysis...to explore, bring to light and articulate the various (indirect) ways in which the two domains do indeed implicate each other, each one finding itself enlightened, informed, but also affected, displaced, by the other.(8-9)

Bringing analytic questions to bear upon literary questions means then, to begin with, examining the kinds of questions asked in psychoanalytic discourse that, applied to a crafted work, might allow an understanding not only of what a text says and doesn't say, but also of how and where the reader is invited to enter the movement of its nonsaying. Given this textual authorization, psychoanalysis thus provides a method for amplifying the condensed dialogue between spoken and unspoken.

In his study Psychoanalysis Never Lets Go, the French analyst François Roustang examines certain

elements of Freud's concept of the unconscious. In the passage cited below, Roustang pauses to consider the paradoxes that have arisen from Freud's view of the "pure negativity" of the unconscious. The psychoanalyst's effort to resist the theoretical morass created by a concept of the unlimited power of the unconscious has led to yet another set of problems. In a closely argued passage, Roustang delineates some of these complexities:

> When Freud describes the unconscious (the system Ucs.) as having the features "exemption from contradiction, primary processes (mobility of investments), atemporality, and replacement of external by psychical reality," [S.E. 14:187] he gives us only negative definitions, which make the unconscious into a pure reversal...that is, a system of reference opposite to the one in which we say we live: absence of negation, of determination, of time, of space, of relations to others, since external reality has disappeared, and, consequently, absence of relation to self....However, [unlike the prevalent tendency to confuse dream and symptom formation, or language itself, with unconscious processes] if one stands by the strict hypothesis of the unconscious as a limit of the knowable and the existent, which is not structured and in fact marks the limit of language itself, then the distortions that are undergone by language and by sexuality in the neuroses and psychoses will be understood as unstable compromises, of varying degrees of intensity, between on the one hand, the force of language and sexuality and, on the other hand, the force of this limit, that is, the hypothetical or mythical site of the confusion of opposites, of the absence of negation, of unreality, of a lack of a separation between life and death.(101-2)

These terms, and the tonality of this passage, show an affinity with the difficulties encountered in reading

reticence, and in developing its conceptualization. Reading reticence, like reading the unconscious, is slippery work. In these endeavors, there is a common struggle with negation and "absence of negation" (in itself a treatise on ambiguity), with the "limit of the knowable," with uncertainty and with unverifiability. Roustang's concern aims at the possibility of locating and defining the compromises that constitute conscious experience and speech and the unavoidable forces behind those compromises. I take his admittedly knotty and meticulous set of distinctions here as one point of departure in grasping the layerings and metaphorical density of my subject. The notion of reading what is present through what is absent is so highly developed in psychoanalysis (and so important, therefore, in my own clinical work) that it offers a particularly appropriate framework for my readings.

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By their particular enactment of the dynamic of the reticent fiction, each of the three works to be examined has determined my understanding of reticence, and each, as I have indicated, will be explicated in that light. More specifically, Goethe's late novel Die Wahlverwandtschaften grounds my understanding of the embodiment of reticence within a "traditional" narrative that is covertly experimental (in the same way that it is modern). A crucial element in the struc-

tures of narrative returns and symbolic patternings is the novel's implicit questioning of "enlightened" and "essential" orderings of connections and events. Moreover, the novel's governing metaphors--such as natural and cultivated growth over time, grafting and union, elevation and drowning, tact and intrusion, and the title metaphor as well--all refer to displacements of expression away from direct speech onto reciprocities of action and depiction that work with silent, and painfully demanding, symmetries.

Goethe's classicism, one which brings words like "measure, "balance," "formal perfection" so quickly to mind in approaching Die Wahlverwandtschaften, is nowhere in evidence in Charlotte Brontë's Villette, which inherits, incorporates and refuses Gothic style and personae even in its emphasis on atmosphere and spectral phenomena that speak more loudly than characters. All the described settings of the novel--conveyances for journeying, architectural structures, schoolrooms, the weather, the streets of its fictional city--have a voice, and we as readers attend to this polyphony as a gloss on the speech of each named character. The defining knowledge and emotion of Lucy Snowe separate her from those who attract her most but for whom she must not articulate her private world. In her own fashion, Brontë was possessed of a hermetic cast of mind. The inwardness of the passions she des-

cribes can live neither in the light of day nor in the glare of reality. In this, her last completed novel, Charlotte Brontë sets forth an imagined moral universe whose constituency is the dispossessed, the displaced and the impoverished. The novel's central character is a paradigm of that constituency. She is one who suffers a multiplicity of impoverishments (Polhemus 109) and cannot reveal her knowledge or her language except through the shared identities involved and expressed in her forms of reticence--intensification, excess and ambiguity. Despite her frequent commentaries on the straightforward plainness of life and language to which she is or feels constrained, Brontë's narrator makes a profession of finding her voices.

There is, overall in Villette, a structural ambiguity in the framing of the narration that relates to time itself and leaves us always wondering where different aspects of the narrative are taking place in memory and in history. This structural ambiguity that, among other effects, refers the end of the tale to the beginning, and vice versa, belies the expectations of fortunate salvation through love that more linear romantic narratives so often claim as resolution. But even the use of the word "claim" to suggest an articulated resolution is problematic, for as I have noted, in Villette everything that is claimed is negated, and everything overtly refused in speech is claimed within

the structures of the novel. This ambivalent process of subversion turning to celebration and turning again to subversion emphasizes the contrasts of an "unreal" external world represented as real but set and played against a passionately desired, denied ideal. For this reason silence and speech undo each other. As I will elaborate, the insistent reticences of Lucy Snowe as narrator mark the episodes of the novel as much as her unwillingly-given revelations.

In these two works, the narrative speech used insists on its integrity as representative of the inner world of the woman (women) around whom the narrative is organized. This is even more forcefully the case with Robert Bresson's film, Une femme douce, based on an 1876 Dostoevsky novella, "The Meek One." In this tale and in the film, the husband as narrator refuses to comprehend his wife's words and gestures, the indicators of the entire separateness of her nature, and through his refusal silences her voice and fore-closes her potential space as a character bent on inhabiting her own narrative. The camera's tracing of his attempts to cancel or negate that voice and all that its existence could imply (most particularly, the terror of her potential counter-narrative) body forth the very substance of the film.

Bresson's film, as I have stated, is perhaps the most finely honed representation of the workings of

reticence. Here, as in the other texts I will study, reticence is the rule of speech and the means of understanding. The texts, and the conceptual and critical frameworks I have sketched, determine my approach to locating the instances and elaborations, cultural, literary, and psychoanalytic, of this form of expression.

Chapter II

Silent Portraiture

The text of Die Wahlverwandtschaften, in its presence and through its "halo" of undeclared potentialities, provides a direction for conceptualizing the language of reticence. Not only the novel itself but also the interpretative conundrums it has given rise to lead us to conceive of reticence and its absent presence as an object of inquiry. The work's salient features and characterizations of speech depict and enact reticence. An attempt to specify its hermeneutic structure, then, runs counter to the elusiveness that is a defining characteristic of the novel. This presupposition is perhaps no more than a statement about reduction, compression and contradiction as components of reticence, but it is also, when dealing with Goethe's novel Die Wahlverwandtschaften, a departure point for speculative interpretation. We ask how Goethe has gone about setting up a series of perhaps antithetical stances in his novel, using the most economical of formal means, and achieving so high a degree of conviction in his representations.

Those antithetical stances mean, for example, that every assertion, both about reticence and about the meaning of this novel, may invite a series of disclaimers. As I have earlier discussed, reticence is not identical with silence, but silently draws upon it.

To withhold speech is an act that takes place within discourse, yet isn't discourse, or at least not in a continuous sense. As a subject of inquiry, reticence appears recurringly, but it is elusive within the context of what would seem to be the conventions and imperatives of the text. Like the psychoanalytic "mise-en-scene" that throws all communication into a symbolic register (or engages in that endeavor), the situation of reading reticence questions how one grasps the signs of refusal when the field of action is an interior one, when the sense of an unwritten passage, of time and thought, shows against the grain of the text, and when that sense must be wrested from a seemingly locked surface.

Die Wahlverwandtschaften, as a totally unified structure, a "closed text," suggests such a reading, thematically and formally. Its continuity of metaphor is unfailing--every conversation, episode or description is interwoven with reverberating, continually enriched images of dwellings and paths, new shoots and garlands, portraits and memorials. Descriptive tags, almost formulaic, reveal the "characteristic" traits of each major presence in the novel--Charlotte, for example, "entschlossen wie sie war," has never acted erratically, and the Captain, so predictably "lakonisch," directs his energies toward work rather than speech. The intricate play of the now fore-

grounded, now transparent narrative voice retains its precise balance throughout. Each moment participates in an arc of completion, and the whole appears to demonstrate a definite, if hard to define, teleology. As in the novelle form that was its original conception (Blackall 163) the novel's plot takes place at some distance from the larger world, in a rarefied domain, and is sparing of incident. Die Wahlverwandtschaften has other affinities to novella form--suggestive though unparticularized namings and locales, an absence of realism in the set-apart world it creates, and an overtly declared symbolic register reiterated in a series of motifs--Eduard's christening glass that shows the letters "E" and "O" intertwined, the chapel paintings, or the moss hut. Of the few characters that appear, fewer speak at any length, and only one, Mittler, has a surname.

However rarefied the novel's world might appear to be, the characters retain their universality. Goethe stated to Eckermann that even with an unusual character (in this case Mittler), a generalized identification was possible, and that he found within himself aspects of most of this novel's portrayals: "There must be some truth in the character...and it must have existed more than once in the world. Indeed, there is not a line in the Wahlverwandtschaften that is not taken from my own experience; and there is more in it than can be

gathered from a first reading" (235; February 9, 1829). He was personally familiar with the self-restraint he imposed on his character Ottilie, and showed what his biographer Boyle terms "the mark of an obsessional asceticism" (303), for not only did Goethe devote himself to strenuous physical exercise, practice restraint in eating, give up coffee, and cut his intake of wine by half; he focused on these elements as a means of self-discipline. In his diary, Goethe wrote: "May the idea of purity, which extends to the morsel I take into my mouth, grow ever brighter within me" (Boyle 303). His biography describes the poet's efforts at self-mastery and containment; but whatever struggle with desire Goethe may have undergone and however dense the associative and referential links between Goethe's life and work, it is clear that his personal experience suffuses the novel as knowledge rather than autobiography.

The telling voice in Die Wahlverwandtschaften thus offers the personalities (and descriptive textures) of the novel as screens for different levels of consciousness and self-consciousness. The sketch that follows of these speaking presences and their relationships necessarily misrepresents the novel's delicacy of characterization but allows us to see its intersecting patterns. Eduard, a Baron possessed of a large estate, and his wife, Charlotte, are introduced as a recently

married couple representative of a still powerful, but increasingly alienated order of wealthy, court-related German aristocrats, who are engaged with bringing their marriage (a second marriage fulfilling first wishes) and their estate to fruition. After trepidation (on the wife's part), discussion and persuasion (on the husband's), they invite Ottilie, Charlotte's niece and dependent, and the Captain, Eduard's childhood friend, a highly skilled but unpropertied officer in need of employment, to join them. Very quickly, the four act upon one another. An unmistakable though chastely expressed passion draws Eduard and Ottilie to each other, in a love and identification delineated by images of self-reflecting resplendence for Eduard, and intense idealization for Ottilie. With less ardent interchanges, and a less dazzled but more observant gaze, an equally powerful "fit" develops between Charlotte and the Captain (who will later in the novel become the Major). In a last sexual encounter between Eduard and Charlotte, with both husband and wife possessing in fantasy their forbidden loves, a child, Otto, is conceived.

Like the infant, the four major characters all have "Otto" as a given name or embedded in that name. We learn that the Baron had in his youth taken his middle name, Eduard, in a gesture accommodating his friend the Captain, for both carried the same first name. The

child is then everyone's namesake. He links but also separates them all; when in the care of Ottilie, he is accidentally drowned. Through the child's death, the register of the novel moves from dilemma to disintegration. Eduard's love for Ottilie and her attempts at renunciation of the love that dominates her as well ultimately lead to her total silence and death through starvation, and to Eduard's subsequent inability to survive without her sustaining nearness.

Although Eduard's decisions, arrivals and departures provide the organizing element for the others in their reactive movements, the personalities, characters and motions of the four interlace, impress themselves changingly upon each other and find bonds of love quite different from their original, conventional arrangements and expectations. Their motions give many implications to the title metaphor, which refers, initially, to a principle and experiment Goethe had learned of, introduced here as an easily observable chemical manipulation demonstrating particularly that two previously stable compounds, sulphuric acid and limestone, when mixed together, lose their initial chemical bonds and recombine to produce differently constituted basic compounds. The schema given and played upon figuratively is AB + CD becomes AD and BC. To the Captain falls the role, perhaps ironically, of revealing how suggestive the four-way, crosswise expe-

riment is: "In diesem Fahrenlassen und Ergreifen, in diesem Fliehen und Suchen glaubt man wirklich eine höhere Bestimmung zu sehen; man traut solchen Wesen eine Art von Wollen und Wählen zu und hält das Kunstwort 'Wahlverwandtschaften' für vollkommen gerechtfertigt" (275; Pt. I, ch. 5). The "higher destiny" the Captain acknowledges has its own choices, and shows itself forcefully without other explanation than its own willful presence.

Other characters echo aspects of the four, and bring in the forces of culture and society to which all are subject, in varying degrees. The most crucial of these is Mittler, the family friend who, making a profession of the imperatives of his name, is formidable (and sometimes comic) in deploying his skills in mediation, honing in most carefully on preserving the institution of marriage. He is the third party whose opinionated presence or absent authority often motivates, situates or witnesses the dialogues of the others. Charlotte and Eduard ask his advice about expanding their circle (and are told, essentially, that they cannot plan or control the future--they can only deal with it) and throughout the novel, his pronouncements intervene at crucial moments. He is voluble in his partialities, but refuses to look upon or speak with his objects of aversion. Thus he leaves abruptly when the Count and the Baroness arrive, Char-

lotte and Eduard's old friends from court, notorious as declared lovers unable to marry (until the novel's close).

A schoolmaster and an architect also figure importantly, adding elaborations of the novel's themes of pedagogy and aesthetic understanding (particularly in relation to artist, amateur and dilettante). They bear witness to Ottilie's inner understanding and purity of spirit and beauty, as does her servant, little Nan, who is most explicitly the inheritor of her ideal. Contrasted to the innately reticent Ottilie is Charlotte's daughter, Luciane, who presents the incarnation of an already debased aristocratic ideal, beautiful and accomplished, but given to an imperious (and talkative) feminine frivolity that can attach to nothing that is assigned value in the narrative. Luciane figures as nearly comic because her sphere of importance is so pointedly transitory a construction, but her poorly aimed impulses are also shown in their potential for destructiveness.

Together these characters inhabit an embellished and symbolically replete natural world. The story as such is told in terms of the estate, and the passion for amelioration expressed through the attention to landscape and buildings. Characters display their reluctance to speak or find their voices in accordance with their immediate settings. These settings exert

their own pressures as idealizing, euphemizing or disguising forces in the carefully observed interactions they frame. The gardens of the manor and the larger park and lands beyond contain and support many unfoldings of identity and affinity, and symbolize as well the spaces of imagined and real barriers between sentient beings. The banks of the lake in particular figure in the display of declarations of love, separation and death. Here, for example, stand the plane trees, grown from discarded shoots by Eduard. Like Ottilie, they could only have reached their full perfection under his protection. The landing under the trees promises both safety and loss; like the flood of asters covering the ground near the end of the novel, water, trees and flowers send out their messages ambiguously.

Within the complex interaction of these elements lie endless questions that point, repeatedly, to a refusal of the explicit and a reminder that formal closure is not necessarily resolution of struggle. The contradiction between the sureness of style and the uncertainty it leads to calls attention to itself by the seemingly endless implications and ramifications of the novel's propositions, thus stimulating the efforts at clarification that the novel defies: "It is the beauty of Die Wahlverwandtschaften that it confronts us again and again with the limits of meaningful talk"

(Jaszi 67). That confrontation seems to be an inviting one. As we might expect in dealing with this much commented upon work, Die Wahlverwandtschaften sends critics speculating in many directions. It has been seen in many conceptualizations: as a study in the sublimely beautiful soul (a component of many approaches); as primarily concerned with tragic fate (François-Poncet) and its relation to the mythic and to an "idealized feudal state" (Benjamin); as a Zeitroman depicting the transition to a bourgeois society (Winkelman) and a new pedagogy and dominance of the civil servant (Kittler); as a critique of the German nobility and of the pervasive influences of derivatives of Romanticism (Steer); as an example of classical clarity subsuming the Romantic and thus as a statement about the role of classicism in the "new" German literature Goethe knew he had been forging (for the novel has been a touchstone of Goethe admiration); as a development of the locus amoenus) theme (Ryan); as a finely nuanced analysis of perception and understanding on symbolic and tragic levels (Lange); as an experiment with fictional narration and form that reflects Goethe's own spiritual and psychological ambiguities (Barnes); as an elaboration of forms of figuring identity (Muenzer) or a deconstruction of differing levels of figurative and literal language (Miller); and in comparison to the English novel of manners (Brown).

Throughout its history in criticism, the novel has been identified as a defense (or indictment) of marriage within a Germany undergoing profound social and political transformations, some of which concerned Goethe closely. Not least, the novel has its biographical palimpsest of Goethe's character and experience, and his own encounter with youth. While this study will draw on those areas, for each direction of interpretation could be shown to bear on a reading of reticence, my concern is neither an exhaustive analysis of this novel nor a reevaluation of its place in the Goethe canon or in literary history per se.

Rather, I approach Die Wahlverwandtschaften as exemplary in that its depictions of characters and sequences overtly problematize reticence; consequently its rhetoric, aesthetic and terms of value are defined by acts of reticence. As I will examine, silence within speech--dialogues that separate rather than communicate--is the measure of the novel's intensity. Reticence in explanation is the accompaniment of actions, and a refusal of speech (Ottilie's drawing all into a silent relationship with her in which each has imaginatively to constitute the reality of the other) the final symbolizing of the tragic limitations of "natural" affinities.

* * * * *

The turn away from communication with society is familiar in fiction, and the nuanced and varied way

Goethe uses it in this novel can be emphasized against the background of the tradition. As Victor Lange recounts, the concept of silence has a long history in German literature:

> ...indications of the limited range of speech or, concomitantly, of a potential meaning beyond language become part of the aesthetic vocabulary of the late eighteenth century....The solitary, whether in serious or trivial literature, is one who has chosen to live apart from his fellow men, often inaccessible in a landscape of forbidding forests and mountains...
> [This figure] recurs in humanist and popular writing wherever the mystical experience is to be rendered in its radical form, unmediated by human speech. In the sceptical intellectual climate of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the solitary takes on an increasingly secular cast; and the silence which continues to constitute his central characteristic is now rationalized in a variety of impulses and projected in a multitude of gestures of reticence--awed; defiant, touching....There are few works either of trivial or sophisticated fiction in late eighteenth-century German literature in which a refugee from private sorrow, or a more general despair at the obtuseness of heart or spirit, is not introduced as a reminder of the strength of silent inwardness over any enlightened faith in discourse; of the difficulties in articulating complexity in language; of the failure of public speech to convey and resolve private concerns.(134)

When we look at the many meanings of "enlightened" in Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Lange's account has a particular relevance, for the conflict of public and private, outward display and inner resonance, colors discussions of every form of the ideal. Most prominently, the novel asks just what form, should it be possible at all, enlightened living (and faith) can take, and how

shall we go about recognizing that form. What source of correspondence are we to believe in when, as is the case with the architect's chapel portraits, which all come to look like Ottilie, we seem to perceive that a painting can be drawn into resemblance with the spirit informing and inspiring not only the creator, but, as if independently, the image as well?

Education is then at least in part a correspondence, a representation of coherence, spiritual as well as practical, and an in-forming of character, as shown by Ottilie's way of learning: by a thorough, if silent, understanding of the purpose of the knowledge to be gained. Characters in the novel, in varying degrees, may be imbued or bound by the understanding education confers, hence, particularly for women, able to be reticent or, conversely, forced to be self-contained. The Baroness exemplifies for Goethe one consequence of an externally directed education. Having learned to master her countenance and her expression, she has yielded a portion of her capacity to live inwardly and be full in her reticence. Perfect control leaves no original trace of what is withheld, only an already transformed signal. Sincerity, like reticence, can be diminished or enhanced. Others in the novel suffer from a misconceived or misapplied form of education, and hence are insistent in their speech, like Mittler. His ideas, even when important, are

often mistimed or misdirected to the "wrong" object, i.e. an audience more cognizant of the implications of his statements than he is. During the child's christening, Mittler takes over the minister's function and speaks at length, particularly about the role of godparents. The novel gives not primarily his words, but the responses of others to the situation of his speech, for he misses the signs of the old minister's collapse. Mittler's lecture near the novel's end about the evil of adultery, which he believes should not even be named in the Ten Commandments lest it be suggested by its articulation, precipitates Ottilie's death, even though Mittler does not (at any point in the novel) instruct or address her directly.

In various ways, almost every scene in the novel comments on the outward reflection of the rightness of education or its deflection from valid aims. True pedagogy completes inwardness; enlightenment flows from ingathering, not expenditure. Ottilie's silent, inner understanding is presented before her arrival by the schoolmaster's letter explaining her inability to perform satisfactorily in the school examinations. "Freilich ist es wunderbar: sie weiss vieles, und recht gut; nur wenn man sie fragt, scheint sie nichts zu wissen....sie lernt nicht als eine, die erzogen werden soll, sondern als eine, die erziehen will; nicht als Schülerin, sondern als künftige Lehrerin" (265; Pt.

I, ch. 3). Ottilie internalizes or rejects; she does not "acquire" knowledge. Her refusal to take in what she does not wish is as literal with regard to her school subjects as is her abstemiousness with food she does not want. If pressed, in her schooling, in a direction she does not wish to go, Ottilie develops headaches, and sometimes begs permission to refuse a request by a gesture of supplication--palms together, head inclined--that belongs more to the language of spirituality than that of the school. The schoolmaster notes that it is not her custom ever to urge her needs or make a demand. And he observes, when she is in conflict: "Eine innere, unangenehme, lebhafte Bewegung, der sie widersteht, zeigt sich durch eine ungleiche Farbe des Gesichts. Die linke Wange wird auf einen Augenblick rot, indem die rechte bleich wird" (279-280; Pt. I, ch. 5). Simultaneously pale and red-faced, she expressed the conflict of unstated thoughts. Only when the purpose of learning or taking in an idea accords with her desire can she do so, and then in a way that can only be accomplished unconsciously.

Both the schoolmaster and Charlotte try, unsuccessfully, to help her develop a more graceful, freer handwriting. But in an episode expressive of a nineteenth-century emphasis on innate, organic sympathy, Ottilie stays up late to copy a contract for Eduard and in so doing replicates his handwriting. She

does so "unknowingly," while he is visiting his wife's room for the last time, and the married couple's failure of sympathy becomes clear. Ottilie finds the means to be "with" Eduard by assimilating a part of him. When Eduard sees that her handwriting has become identical to his own, he rightly apprehends her message: "Ottilie, du liebst mich!" She has "learned" him in the night following his now-embarrassing visit to Charlotte.

Through such images of organic correspondences preceding words, the novel emphasizes and traces the inwardness of speech crystallizing into a dominant, persuasive theme of attachment. Characters speak fluently about scientific theories, estate governance, art and decoration, landcape improvement and pedagogy. But on the level of inwardness, everything heightened is confided to a diary, inserted within the narration as is the novella told by the English lord, or reported as thought by characters either silently or spoken as if facing an uncomrehended destiny, giving the novel its Racinian quality of dialogues with an ultimate power. Further, by its alignment in the figure of Ottilie of all the virtues of seemingly unobtrusive innocence with a characterological reticence, Die Wahlverwandtschaften suggests allegorizing silence and withholding. Yet, the interweaving of themes and the multiplicity of motifs and meanings do not support a

purely allegorical reading, nor does the novel's "experiment." Even the ordinary acts of daily life strike us as specific to this world and are either detailed in their strivings for orderliness, exposed as purposeless, or elevated, as in Ottilie's acts of service, to the transcendent.

In Goethe's portrayal of the forms of both aristocratic and bourgeois activity as they intersect in and around the estate, the sheer economy of presentation, in language and episode, implies inwardness and is a narrative motif in its own right. This motif, like the novel's press toward tragedy, reaches its greatest intensification in the compressed account, shifted into the present tense (as are certain other crucial moments in the narrative), of the infant's drowning. The image that links this compositional aspect of the novel to its characterizations is one that refers to at least two structures of understanding: this is the image of the British Navy's red thread to which Ottilie's devotion is likened, "ein Faden der Neigung und Anhänglichkeit" (368; Pt. II, ch. 2), that shows in every page of her diary and binds together all aspects of her nature. Each character is similarly singularized and swiftly placed into the stream of the narrative, and each quickly demonstrates the expected decorum of the given social context. So rapid is the process, so seamless, that each conversa-

tion or description in the novel is at once a minimal clarification and a transformation of what has gone before. Thus within a few pages Eduard and the Captain find again their old pleasurable leisure pursuits, plan the course of many months' work, go over their pasts--and decenter the structure of the household. Henceforth, husband and wife sleep in different wings of the house, so that Eduard and the Captain can work more closely on their (Eduard's) projects. Charlotte and Eduard have less and less to communicate to each other; all meet in the evening for discussions of more general interest.

The Captain, skilled in engineering and management, among other abilities, addresses the crucial distinction between amateur and dilettante. He likens Charlotte's landscaping efforts to the mistakes of the dilettante, essentially because her work is piecemeal, with no informing vision of the whole--of how the estate and all it relates to can best fulfill its purpose and potential (responsibilities as well as pleasures). This critique of the dilettante is very early introduced in the narrative, but the same highly efficient pattern of a newly arrived resident or visitor varying a theme, contradicting a comfortable ideal, and providing exposition of personal history while elaborating a complex position weaves through the novel. Schoolmaster, lawyer, and architect refract the

languages of the new professionals and the perceptions of the artist; the English lord appears with his "camera" (a displaced connoisseur of sights) almost like a conjurer of the past as well as a harbinger of the future. He presents the embedded Novelle, a magical version of the story involving the Captain's early love. His companion reflects the current interest in magnetism (to which Charlotte is resistant, Ottilie receptive). Luciane too reveals much of the comedy and danger accompanying the self-promoting dilettante. In her most cruel act, she plays at being a psychologist, but her refusal to accept a disturbed young woman's need for seclusion and silence pushes the girl into madness.

In another, equally representative form of economy, an episode or theme moves to the foreground of "plot" in the same passage of time and text that reduces action to understatement as it occurs. Again, it is the death of the infant that exemplifies this most powerfully. Through this death, the paradox of the belief in duty and resignation--the subject of considerable dialogue--is finally shown in its full inadequacy and yet made even more imperative. The language of legitimacy dies out of centrality in the novel at this moment. It has been silenced by the more demanding action of the underlying language of desire. It is only at the novel's close that understatement and

foreground in theme and plot come together. After Ottilie's death, her imagined voice speaks to her young servant Nanny as her real silence (her death) cannot: When the despairing child falls from her window as Ottilie's funeral cortege passes and lands near the body, within moments of being placed against Ottilie she arises sound again in mind as well as body. Her insistent claim to all is that Ottilie (whose nature heals) has spoken to her, and forgiven her. She can, then, "return" from her madness of guilt to the sphere of the novel's action and dialogue.

By contrast, the novel's moments of reticence overtly characterized as such show gaps in understanding that state limits and define disjunctures. For example, when Charlotte, talking to Eduard about Ottilie, admits her own withheld thoughts after Eduard has asked to invite the Captain, her husband responds with a revealing but awkward gallantry. It suggests their lack of sympathy with each other, and points to a missing urgency in their relationship: "ich merke wohl, im Ehestand muss man sich manchmal streiten. denn dadurch erfährt man was voneinander" (250; Pt. I, ch 2). His conceit is that if AB becomes A vs B, it is only to become more truly AB. We are struck more by the implication of an initial weakness of bonding than by the idea of reconciliation. Even as a wish on Eduard's part to know Charlotte better, this expression

marks a gap that suggests a discontinuous discourse, an unexpected and oddly placed hiatus, for there is no resolution of disagreement here--only a disparity of perspective masked by the conventions of the marriage discourse. Eduard wants to know his wife better in so far as she is like him or can prove her desire to be so. But he forms his conventional spoken response to suit appearances. In the context of what has preceded and what follows, his praise of conflict really affirms what it negates. This theme, of an inner experience taking place in the imagination in marked opposition to simultaneous symbolic and real referents, reappears in the couple's later "adultery" with each other. As with other and more oblique interlacings of reticence, this moment questions the terms of sincerity.

* * * * *

Part One begins very peacefully, in clearest sunlight and in a mood of "calm" tension, it would seem. The first chapter sets out some of the problems the novel will turn on, sets them out, however, as reflections. Eduard, the first and central pivot of the novel's movements, briefly surveys the satisfying new growth on the estate with his gardener, sounding the first of many readings of landscape that mold and balance the narrative. From the film-panning like sequence that follows Eduard along as he climbs to meet Charlotte for their first, elaborately situated "collo-

quy" in the moss hut, which Eduard begins by objecting to the strenuousness of the path, until his calm but devastatingly accurate observation, "Die Hutte scheint mir etwas zu eng,"(243; Pt. I, ch 1) the tone and level of diction understate the tenor of the coming struggle. The terms of the undoing of a calm surface are prepared and marked along the way as dispassionately as the stones and slopes Eduard is depicted as passing on his way to find Charlotte. The first instance of explanation in the novel presents the formalized dance of the marriage union, which like the moss hut, will become a confinement unless the imagined other is present.

The crossing to that point is the crossing into the sphere of tragedy, accomplished so deftly that we do not realize its dimensions, or see how many idealized worlds move toward articulation and disaster. That is, the deictic nature of this passage, its sense (and tense) of crucial action taking place in the present, begins a series of formal presentations of positions that, in various permutations of class structures, aspects of appropriation, and questions of growth and harmony, give the novel its patterned characteristics. The differently coalescing structures focus our attention on the fact that while individual fate, the pattern of a life, is not under our control, it is also not random. Nature grows otherwise under cultivation than it does without strictures, but never

randomly. The topography of the estate, which the four characters are so eager to see mapped out, is but one of the novel's topographies seeming to have its own destiny. Characters err in their belief in the full decipherability of their lives and their surroundings. In the sphere of marriage (the sphere Mittler would like to consider free from unwelcome permutations), the distribution and array of at least ten past, present or prospective married couples are discussed--Charlotte and Eduard (and their respective first husband and wife), Eduard and Ottilie, Ottilie and the Captain, Charlotte and the Captain, the young couple in the Novelle, Ottilie and the teacher, the Count and the Baroness, and Charlotte's daughter Luciane and her fiancé. Only the latter two, portrayed as totally of this world, are intact at the novel's close.

The first, elaborate dialogue between Eduard and Charlotte takes place in the symbolically recurring moss hut. Here, where Charlotte intended to enjoy quiet moments with her husband, the third becomes a subject for a decentered discussion of the future and a recollection of the past events that have brought them to this point. The wife speaks with the wisdom of maturity and the apprehensiveness of experience, yet seeking growth and fulfillment to come. Charlotte is the character who names, links and introduces fate and the unconscious into their dialogues. But Eduard's

sphere of engagement has already shifted, if only slightly. All that is to follow proceeds from this delicately signalled misalignment--"etwas zu eng." Eduard's imaginative reach into the future has already changed that future beyond what either partner has language to express.

Initially, a calm prospect for a life together is present to the gaze of both. In this novel, prospect (beholding in future time) is the visual form of persuasion (verbal attraction); it can generate desire, by proximity or by distance.[1] But prospect can also generate anxiety, in opposition to desire. Charlotte's words may warm Eduard, but they also suggest limitation and finiteness. It would seem there is no longer a need for Eduard to exert will or be generative of events. Without such effort, Eduard is undefined, unable to know or articulate himself, silenced. What Charlotte mirrors for him is what he cannot resign himself to being, if he must be so exclusively; the world she attempts to persuade him to love would mean a renunciation. As Eduard's imperious narcissism sees it: "freimütig, wohltätig, brav, ja tapfer im Fall--was konnte in der Welt seinen Wünschen entgegenstehen" (249; Pt. I, ch. 2)! If thwarted, he has merely to

[1] In Austen's Pride and Prejudice, the slippage from prospect to possession is made explicit, and opens the way to desire.

shift his gaze, and enlist the Captain to remove obstacles for him. Ironically, the Captain will do this by taking over Eduard's plans and projects (Charlotte included) as his own, even when Eduard has lost all interest in them. Eduard directly expresses desire for more and for other; if one goes forward, even unthinkingly, things can be expected to fall into place. The couple's dialogue makes clear that renunciation and denial make unstable bedfellows. Here, as elsewhere, whether the relation spoken of is between intimate friends or strangers, or concerns elements of landscaping and gardening, persuasion brings resistance with it, as lightness of tone belies, yet underscores, the potential for disintegration.

With so much fullness brought out in the novel's opening--fullest moment of day, month, year, and life, the question of time and its long unfolding begins to assert itself as a thematic focus. Goethe's own history was of a later sexual fulfillment and a reluctance to marry, fearing that state as "the end of desire." (Boyle 199). The relation of ripening self-knowledge to the prerogatives and limitations of age, the temptation to abandonment of that knowledge and the cataclysm brought by the attractions of youth (all experiences Goethe knew well) play as a constant subtext in Die Wahlverwandtschaften.

Reticence about this subject weaves through Eduard and Charlotte's first conversation; neither knows

precisely what is to be feared by introducing a change in their arrangements, but they sense that time will bring loss. Eduard will lose that open vista on the wealth of his own impulses. Charlotte will find her freedom to imagine the future curtailed. But in the immediacy of their dialogue another distance occurs, that between differing construals of the same statements. At this moment difference turns to an occasion for duplicity. As they talk, Eduard imagines while Charlotte weighs awareness. The discrepancy in weight given by different speakers to propositions for action and governance (why not? as opposed to but think!), a suggestion of congruence where there is conflict, a wish for identification where there is projection--all these elements, in this first quite lengthy conversation, are reticent enactments.

We question why, for instance, if this is "dialogue" in the present, Charlotte must bring to bear the whole armament of their past, a past which, in light of their supposed reunion after earlier arranged and unsatisfactory marriages, was a long digression leading up to their present arrangement.

> So fanden wir uns wieder. Wir freuten uns der Erinnerung, wir liebten die Erinnerung, wir konnten ungestört zusammenleben. Du drangst auf eine Verbindung; ich willigte nicht gleich an, denn da wir ungefähr von denselben Jahren sind, so bin ich als Frau wohl älter geworden, du nicht als Mann. Zuletzt wollte ich dir nicht versagen, was du für dein einziges Glück zu halten schienst. Du wolltest von allen Unruhen, die du bei

> Hof, im Militär, auf Reisen erlebt hattest, dich an meiner Seite erholen, zur Besinnung kommen, des Lebens geniessen; aber auch nur mit mir allein.(246; Pt. I, ch. 1)

Charlotte twice stresses, in this passage, the role of memory in their marriage. Their memory gave them pleasure and they loved in each other what they remembered. Eduard has insisted on marriage in order to rest in a recaptured past--by definition a wish that must quickly exhaust itself, unless death is the goal. Charlotte has yielded in hopes that renewal of vows will enhance felicity (for though they are similar in age, she is aware that, as a woman, she must bear the consequences of being considered the older). By stating a portion of what she fears to lose, she succeeds in making the greater fear more vague, and letting the indefiniteness of the future recede. We realize that for Charlotte to verbalize her fears too explicitly would be to suggest their power to Eduard. Charlotte's particular register of reticence lies in her knowledge that words have real consequences (not magical ones, as for Mittler): to articulate is to knowingly precipitate. Thus her tactfulness is born of an anxiety of knowledge, and her choice of utterance stems from her sense of urgency.

When she convincingly presents their life as sheltering, her words allow Eduard to feel reassured by memory. Eduard's thoughts at the very beginning of the next chapter reiterate their former pleasure: "und

wirklich hatte die Wiederholung seiner Lebensschicksale aus dem Munde Charlottens, die Vergegenwärtigung ihres beiderseitigen Zustandes, ihrer Vorsätze sein lebhaftes Gemüt angenehm aufgeregt"(249; Pt. I, ch. 2). Through suggestion, she has made the passively ideal depiction of their chosen path come to life, given it force and feeling. But as soon as the thought of not inviting the Captain recurs, so does Eduard's sense of confinement. In his own conceptualization their marriage plan becomes at that moment too remote, belonging already to a dislocated past.

On another level, the fact that Charlotte mentions "Das Schicksal" (245) twice in a row in her quietly reasoned considerations underscores the theme that at best, one never has more than an uncertain grasp of the imperfectly apprehended forces at play in the dynamics of human relationships. Their recital seems oddly focussed (unexpectedly intent) in the context of so much peaceful ennobling of their personal domain, as if at least three conditions press upon them: a) as if they were, in imagination, still kept apart, still deciding whether or not to come together, or b) as if they were not mutually acquainted with the same intimate history, or c) as if the suggestion of such an undertaking as inviting the captain were somehow out of joint rather than being an expectable social pattern of friendship and patronage. In fact, Charlotte's hesita-

tion has its well-founded basis. She expresses in terms of destiny her uneasy perception of a rapidly changing social and cultural system that will indeed overturn much in their lives. But for both partners, evocation takes the place of recognition. Eduard's hesitation in revealing his plan to his wife, and Charlotte's foreboding about what she dares not know, cannot be accurately read by them, the novel demonstrates, since such danger goes against the conscious, social organization of their lives.

Eduard tries to bring the whole discussion to an inclusive, rather than exclusive, culmination: "Nimm Ottilien, lass mir den Hauptmann, und in Gottes Namen sei der Versuch gemacht!" (252; Pt. I, ch. 2) Such an aleatory approach is beyond Charlotte, and, just as she will dislike the chemical experimentation that dislodges elements from their original compounds, she objects to this experiment. The pattern of shifting background and foreground emerges here when Charlotte brings up as her next, seemingly anticlimactic reservation (and suggestion), the possible impropriety of the young and lovely Ottilie proving too appealing to the Captain. Their discourse continues to diverge in referents and degree of sincerity. Eduard speaks a disclaimer about Ottilie's attractions, Charlotte praises him for it--and carefully withholds her previous thoughts of Eduard and Ottilie as a couple.

Thus an elaborate prefiguring of the novel's many lines of thought finds its place in the unspoken, half-foreseen presences embedded in this moment of dialogue.

The couple welcomes their old friend, the arbitrator Mittler, a complex, value-laden figure whose role in the novel is another essential red thread. He is doubly welcomed by Eduard and Charlotte; they have never before, to their mutually agreed upon knowledge, experienced an insurmountable awkwardness. This first open conflict of aims, ostensible and real, opens a gulf between them. Further, Charlotte's recital of the past in light of the complexities to come reads, though is not spoken, as an elegy rather than a plea, as is so much in this most elegaic of novels. Set against the elegaic function of the landscape is a wrestling with the angel. The honesty of the novel, and its relation to truth, is that which position is Jacob's and which that of the angel; that is, for (and through) whom does the emissary speak, is not apparent. Are we never to change (Eduard's question) or enjoy happiness (but which?) are uncertainties that recur throughout the novel. After the child's death, Charlotte will come back to this questioning, but with the Major: "Wir haben nicht verschuldet, unglücklich zu werden, aber auch nicht verdient, zusammen glücklich zu sein" (461; Pt. II, ch. 14).

In the lives of people, as Charlotte admits, predictability, like happiness, is a goal, often idealized

and seldom known except by suggestion. The novel, through its refrain of interacting social structures creating the fabric of life, claims adherence to order. Celebrations, for example, bring together different classes and functions in supposed harmony with each other. In these scenes--laying a cornerstone or celebrating Charlotte's or Eduard's birthdays--members of the entire community have a role to play. Yet the celebrations go awry, and the celebrants are ensnared in the disorder they have unknowingly created. Order is only predictable in its abstraction and, less surely, in its constraining influence. Further, we know from Goethe's works and from the difficulty of ascribing any certain affirmative meaning to this novel that such precepts of order cannot be applied systematically. They constitute instead an intricate and sometimes ambivalent construct. As so much in Goethe's writing indicates, and as his concern for understanding things in themselves and in the forms necessary to them witnesses, spontaneous feeling informs order, if the latter is to be alive. Certainly Goethe is not charting a Blakean "road of excess," nor is the estate ever successful as a palace of wisdom, yet in language as in subject, the novel turns on the balance between the spiritual and emotional capacity to <u>inform</u> experience and the temptation to exceed (reject or fail to recognize) "natural" limitations.

The susceptibility to regulation of nature's spontaneity and its responsiveness to planning and intervention would also seem to point the way toward regulating the equally susceptible growth of human "graftings." The metaphor is illusory, however. Growth in people, "development," reaches into an archaic matrix as well as toward a realization of being--however we describe that state. Within a societal framework, notions of progress have meaning; but innate order works with a different complexity. Planting, as in the case of Eduard's plane trees, leads to delight, pride and a sense of success in ordering. Yet the old gardener complains that new forms can no more be fully anticipated than the survival of each individual shoot can be assured. In an elaborate symbolism around the themes of growth, images of nature and cultivation in the novel link perception, "informing" and order.

Similarly, the inhabitants and visitors to the estate engage in pursuits devoted to understanding nature that are representative of those Goethe himself mastered and considered the appropriate spheres of human study. Each of their endeavors says something about what has value, and serves as analogy, but no one statement fully answers to the concerns of the novel with appropriate orderings. Nor, finally, do the cycles of nature altogether explain the meaning of the novel's symmetries.

Order then is not a characteristic to be imposed externally upon phenomena, or upon people. True order is an effect of the realization of the inmost being of something, its essence revealed and the implications of that essence discovered and implemented. Since order is present and internal, not only symbolized, it is silent in this sense, and classic also, in that it is the most ideal realization of spiritual and aesthetic purpose uniting form and expression. Thus the landscape, like the character of Ottilie as seen by the schoolmaster, is meant to be viewed as an ideal, and schooled to fulfill its own nascent perfection. Further, "what caught Goethe's interest was the form and function of phenomena in their fully concrete individuality; his aim was to penetrate into the specific self-regulation that inheres in all organisms" (Stephenson 59). Cultivation for Goethe was inextricably linked to beauty and utility rather than preservation only, an emphasis shown by the many estate projects and even the arrangement of the villagers, subordinated in their individuality, decoratively dressed for Sundays and pleasingly (for the beholder) deployed in front of their houses. But in this novel Goethe also examines what happens when improvement and essence collide; false knowledge of what should be done will lead to false effects, as the Captain points out to Eduard. It is for this reason that the shape of things must be so

visible, and description so precise (so reticent); interpretation through rearticulation should, ideally, be superfluous.

> We talk too much. We ought to talk less and draw more. For my part, I should like to lose the habit of conversation and, like nature, express myself entirely in drawings. That fig tree, this little snake, the chrysalis lying there in front of the window quietly awaiting the future--all these are pregnant with meaning. Indeed, anyone who knew how to decipher them properly would soon be able to do without all writing and speech! The more I think about it, the more speech seems to be useless, idle, I might almost say effete, so that we are terrified in the face of the quiet earnestness of nature, and her silence, whenever we encounter it concentrated into a solitary rockface or in the desolation of the ancient hills! (Gage 73)

Thus Goethe in June of 1809, the year of Die Wahlverwandtschaften's completion. The statement reads partly as a description of the Ottilie-ideal, and Goethe's placement of her functions for those who are able to see her. In the concentration, terror and earnestness of beholding nature lie meanings patient of decipherment, and sparing of language. In recognition of the task he had set himself, and perhaps accomplished, Goethe was to say that Die Wahlverwandtschaften needed at least three readings to be comprehended.

Seen in this perspective, even elaborate articulation can be reticent of its meaning. It is, for example, a particular uselessness of speech that Charlotte brings to mind, though it is not clear for whom she speaks, when she describes the (very Freudian) notion

of "diese dunklen Anregungen" being "unbewusste Erinnerungen glücklicher und unglücklicher Folgen, die wir an eigenen oder fremden Handlungen erlebt haben" (248; Pt. I, ch. 1). Her forebodings concern consequences of choices made, unevenly alive in memory and entering into dialogue with the gaps in clarity of each new moment. It isn't really the secrets of the past that cause disorder in the present. The past, one form of the absent present, yields no predictability since it cannot properly be understood. Its lessons were unwittingly experienced and erratically learned. Neither tact nor good will nor intelligence will fully reveal just what Charlotte's obscure intimations imply about the judgments of the present. As she states, awareness is an inadequate and even dangerous weapon against error. Eduard would like to believe that the necessary can be known and controlled through (male) dominance of the surfaces of experience. His willed displacement of responsibility for unpleasant consequences seeks to deny the force and quantity of what he doesn't understand. By refusing the illusion that either his purposes or her fears are innocent, Charlotte's answer opens another layering of meanings:

> "Das kann wohl geschehen," versetzte Eduard, "bei Menschen, die nur dunkel vor sich hinleben, nicht bei solchen, die, schon durch Erfahrung aufgeklärt, sich mehr bewusst sind."
>
> "Das Bewusstsein, mein Liebster," entgegnete Charlotte, "ist keine hinlängliche

> Waffe, ja manchmal eine gefährliche für den, der sie führt...." (248; Pt. I, ch. 1)

The warning, which she holds back from elaborating, emphasizes that this is a novel in which neither intent nor awareness can explain action, for conscious bonds dissolve, and the subsumed, "repressed" narrative surfaces. Charlotte's own farseeing candor proves as helpless as Eduard's myopic, precipitous passion. Ideas of necessity and inevitability as socially responsive, fixed principles of existence are shown to be subject to the same laws of dissolution and recombination that will govern the lover and the husband. Later, when Eduard returns to his wife to establish their mésalliance, the blindness of their contractual expectations of each other recalls their conversation in the moss hut. A first reticence has generated a second strong enough to implicate the child's conception.

This central act, when each sees the face of the other, real beloved, sexualizes the meaning of what Charlotte has said about the influence of the third: "Nichts ist bedeutender in jedem Zustande, als die Dazwischenkunft eines Dritten" (248). Over the course of the novel, the idea of a crucial third person will intensify as the envisioned or silently addressed other who is always a latent presence in reticent speech. Charlotte knows that rules for a dyadic state change from dependence (it was Eduard's wish to rest in her)

to separation from the original tie, when the third becomes a manifest presence. The novel's brief, opening moment of near-stasis has shown that Eduard's bonding gains energy in flux, precisely in the way he exerted himself to win Charlotte; he now waits impatiently for a new element to rearticulate himself.

* * * * *

With its initial dispassionate preparation for deception and confusion accomplished, the novel turns to a depiction of the crystalline structure of relationships, for each character occupies an inalterable position in the drama. With so many forms of explication, so much intertwining of narrative themes and individual fates (all beautifully imaged in the succession of problematic and emblematic garlands prepared for house dedication, birthdays, and chapel decoration), the novel would appear to take the step from belief in permutation to desirability of change. The two highly balanced parts of the novel suggest symmetry and yet unmask it, and this too suggests the idea of change. Given the introduction of so many elements in Part One, with various possible forms of influence, change, as apart from recombination, particularly in relationships, would seem to be included. Yet the novel questions whether change is actually no more than disguised recurrence. Progression occurs in the sense of making manifest what is latent, yet it seems very

much the thesis of the book that development is not change, and can even preclude it.

As an enemy of change, the problematic character of Mittler is another type of the third, one who transmits, intercedes and regulates. In an odd correspondence with the figure of Ottilie, Mittler's role in the novel reconfigures the image of the solitary as one who can neither live in society nor leave it. His style remains that of his former religious ministry, both in his sense of mission and in his language. Covering the countryside in search of conflicts needing resolution, a Quixote counter-figure given to preserving society at the price of romance, Mittler claims the spiritual validity of a socially acceptable (Protestant) seer. His defense of marriage is ardent, and alluding as powerfully as he does to the weight of time in relationships, he is allowed the force of conviction in his discourse:

> Der Ehe ist der Anfang und der Gipfel aller Kultur. Sie macht den Rohen mild, und der Gebildetste hat keine bessere Gelegenheit, seine Milde zu beweisen. Unauflöslich muss sie sein; denn sie bringt so vieles Glück, dass alles einzelne Unglück dagegen gar nicht zu rechnen ist....Sich zu trennen gibts gar keinen hinlänglichen Grund. Der menschliche Zustand ist so hoch in Leiden und Freuden gesetzt, dass gar nicht berechnet werden kann, was ein Paar Gatten einander schuldig werden. (306-307; Pt. I, ch. 9)

His beliefs appeal to the desire for clarity, permanence and a promise of no loss in separation: in short, all the impersonal protection of culture and a comfort-

ing vision of human destiny. Though proceeding from a social as well as a "moral" order, marriage ought not to be subject to a potentially chaotic inner reality, or to human "impatience."

In a particularly effective stance toward his own knowledge, Mittler confounds attempts to argue with him. By linking the worth of his words to the sincerity of his convictions, he subscribes to a belief in the magical power of his speech to create an ideally static world. Statements assimilating the psychological to the social order are sufficient, he claims, to bring into being the state they describe, for in society as well as in the imagination, the statements themselves can be potent structures. This is the source of his success at mediation, and of his power as a Hermes figure, messenger and Guide of Souls both; or even, given his talent for precipitating a sure ending in situations hovering at the edge, an eager ferryman. As one who would relegate passion to the merely temporal sphere, Mittler presents a peculiar coherence within his world of sometimes illusory beliefs, and in this sense he is a pivot for the narrative. On one level, he represents those in the novel who would eliminate from view whatever disturbs--for Mittler it is specifically the cemetery (symbol of the temporality he seeks to override) and the Count and the Baroness (agents of the disorder he opposes).

On another level, this recasting of the world to emphasize his own centrality in it, and the sometimes inappropriate tenor of his speech, emphasize that in the world of passion or desire, he is the eternal juvenile. His presence signals a discrepancy between the demands of immediacy (for like a juvenile, he cannot be reticent in his need to be heard) and intimacy (which doesn't include him). He is always full of activity, verbal and physical, dominates when he is present, yet because he denies the validity of the real in favor of the conventional, he is blind to the power of the intimacy he rails against. He speaks, in part, for the tenuous (and untenable, for others) position that approximate form creates minimally sufficient content, and although many words (for we see the excess of his language through the silencing effect it has on others) reportedly flow from him, his stated beliefs suggest that in so far as spontaneity in love is concerned, the less seen, or acknowledged in speech, the better. For this reason, Mittler hates the presence of the secret, the thing that lovers know but that the married, belonging to society as they do, cannot afford to have.

The infant becomes the sign of those secrets, for he has the Captain's features, Ottilie's eyes, isn't nursed or carried by his mother (Ottilie bottle feeds and cares for the child), and is seen only once, and

with little interest, by his father. Both Eduard and the Captain (now become a Major) find his death, on balance, a positive sign that no further element will intrude in their intended rearrangement of marriages and unambiguously conceived sons. Paradoxically, by representing the marriage tie at its strongest, the child is the most dangerous of thirds, and threatens the new, elective order. Charlotte's grief stills her, leaving her concerned for the others but quiescent for herself. Ottilie alone sees in this death a monstrous statement of her own guilt, and perhaps an indication of their collective hubris as well.

In the direct dialogues between Charlotte and Ottilie, the narrative elaborates divergent meanings of secrets partly shared and partly concealed. Charlotte, for example, reserves explanations of her own decisions when speaking with Ottilie and does not discuss the latter's relation to Eduard explicitly. In the striking scene in which Charlotte speaks to the Captain over Ottilie's recumbent body, she speaks directly to the latter's aspirations to reach an ideal. Ottilie's innermost self hears her, we are told, but the hearing takes all her energy; she can neither move nor speak during Charlotte's discourse. Thus their two most crucial conversations, those in which they are in most direct communication with each other, take place on different levels of consciousness, in silence and in

memory. Ottilie can only hear inwardly, in a trance state in which sexuality is vanquished. Once before, in her childhood, a similar scene with Charlotte occurred, stirring her to a first renunciation of personal expectations. The impression of this second scene similarly reinforces her sense of transgressed imperatives and dread of her own nature, "...ich bin aus meiner Bahn geschritten, ich habe meine Gesetze gebrochen, ich habe sogar das Gefühl derselben verloren...ich schaudere über mich selbst" (462-463; Pt. II, ch. 14). Although she hears Charlotte agree to the divorce, her "Totenschlaf" prevents a refusal of the plan. Her dread of her own moral responsibility requires conscious control to articulate; one voice silences the other in her.

* * * * *

Ottilie's richness as a figure of silence and therefore as a frame for reading the novel's reticence develops in the dynamics of her relationships and in her representative functions for others in the novel. From the chapter announcing her arrival she moves into increasing definition as a figure who by her presence and her gestures, as much as by her language, suggests what she does not speak. Upon her arrival at Eduard's estate, she clasps Charlotte's knees almost as a supplicant, much to Charlotte's discomfiture and embarrassment. So excessive a humbling--"Wozu die

Demütigung!" (281; Pt. I, ch. 6)--seems, if it is not actually asking pardon of Charlotte for Ottilie's very existence, to suggest a difference through degrees of age, beauty, status and dependence that will become a silent, persistent transgression. Even given her enlightened sense of responsibility, Charlotte is more immobilized by her power than Ottilie is by her subservience, and they are forced to live out the dialectic of their positions.

Since Ottilie has only to be, to be engaging, and initially desires no more, she need not attempt to determine events. Charlotte's enclosure is that she must act. Their very difference will turn to tragedy. Further, the role and charcter of Ottilie emerges more clearly from her exchanges and reticences with Charlotte, and the latter's withholding of information from her, than through the dialogues of any other constellation of characters in the novel. That is, without the most problematic affinity in the novel, which includes the bonds of kinship, obligation and devotion between Ottilie and Charlotte, the other, "elective" affinities could find resolution or not, as Mittler suggests, but their drama would be on a social, novel of manners level. The relation of the women is an overdetermining factor in the fatefulness of the experiment. All the silent discrepancies of meaning articulated around and by these two women have this supposed commonality as their ground.

In this context, from her first appearance Ottilie has a deceptive force; she is a dependent whose silent gestures orient all action around her, a character whose personality will determine the flow of events in Part II as Eduard does in Part I. The degree of attachment felt toward her partly determines the degree of frustration or fulfillment the future will grant to each of the others. After the child's death, Ottilie claims a place in the pantheon of those destined to suffer, and warns this might be the case for those who love her: "Das Geschick ist nicht sanft mit mir verfahren...und ver mich liebt, hat vielleicht nicht viel Besseres zu erwarten." (467; Pt. II, ch. 15). Delineated as a pure receptor of Eduard's need and desire, Ottilie only slowly reveals her own "gravitational" pull. We note her inner sympathy; she, and not at all Charlotte, is particularly responsive to a visitor's experiment with magnetism, causing motion with no external, conscious motion on her part. Even as a dependent, even finding herself, at crucial junctures in her life, at Charlotte's knees and unable to speak (since what she could say would be the negation of her own desire), Ottilie is the supplicant who rules.

Traditions of beauty, peace or rest, virtue, sorrow, wisdom and resignation are expressed through the figure of Ottilie, in her diary, and around the subject

of her being. When she learns, at the end of Part One, that Charlotte is pregnant, Ottilie is assigned, in the limpid erlebte rede of the narratorial voice, to another register, a sphere of withdrawal from hope and wish, speech and understanding, "Sie hatte nichts weiter zu sagen" (359; Pt. I, ch. 18). That is, henceforth we are self-consciously directed by the narrative to her inner world, with the explicit observation that her self-articulation may be glimpsed through the reading of her inserted diary entries. All singly-framed telling, this strategy suggests, necessarily falls short of complete utterance. Thus not only is it the case that different narrative forms enforce Ottilie's prominence in the novel, but also episodic organization unfolds consequent to the effect of Ottilie's appearance and the interactions with her, leading us to conjure further implicit meanings.

That we read Ottilie's reticence as a guide to the interpretation of the novel has a certain irony. Her character is, as we have seen, more fully and artfully asserted than any other, but she is also a figure whose rightness of being is subtly put in question. That is, innocence and silence are closely associated, and seem to appear together, but silence does not of itself imply innocence, nor can withholding or an inhibition of speech ever be entirely innocent and unknowing.

Further, for all the fineness of perception that characterizes her, Ottilie is also portrayed as an

almost formless catalyst. Some of the most commented upon and paradigmatic scenes of the novel come to mind in discussing Ottilie's quiet accommodation to the desires of others. One is her first divergence from Charlotte's side, when she takes the rougher path with Eduard and thereby becomes his companion. Also, Eduard has, quite soon after her arrival, given his perception of her as charming, even though, as Charlotte points out in a brief exchange, she hasn't really spoken, "'Unterhaltend?' versetzte Charlotte mit Lächeln; 'sie hat ja den Mund noch nicht aufgetan.'" Eduard's answer begins to frame the world of his new passion: "So?...das wäre doch wunderbar" (281; Pt. I, ch. 6)! Charlotte is amused, he is amazed, and both continue as if in ignorance of the gap Ottilie represents that this time, in contrast to the moss hut conversation, needed only a few lines to be reinscribed in the narrative.

The attraction to Eduard's form that Ottilie enacts in copying his contract and in the process instinctively replicating his handwriting represents the sympathetic nature of their attachment, as does her accommodation to his flute playing through a "rewriting" of the music itself to suit his rhythm. She will, in a gesture saintly (or assenting), and implicitly knowing in its exchange of one father for another, more approachable one, obediently entrust to Eduard the locket containing her father's portrait. These

determining scenes (central for critical discussions of the novel) claim the status of parables of fusion. They are each a description of language inadequate to emotion, where to talk more would be to say less, to theorize rather than embody. All of these incidents are set against the long idealizing meditation upon Ottilie's nature (a meditation which is also a claim to status as her protector) sent by her teacher. Meditations on personal characterstics are pervasive in the novel, but this one on Ottilie's nature is promoted to importance in the same way as her diaries, a grounding for our acceptance of the eloquence of Ottilie's reticence and the tone of the narration, but self-consciously introduced into it.

Defining incidents involving Ottilie do not function, however, as "complication" in terms of plot structure. Rather, the movement set in motion by Ottilie's presence and her reflecting force (part of Goethe's "experiment"), spreads to ever larger samples, and touches our (the observers') interpretation of other structures. As with any other experiment, observers play a central role, so Ottilie observes and is observed in widening contexts.

The letters from school report that Luciane is the first to perceive her as an enemy, and the two daughter types are contrasted in many aspects of their personalities and intentions, as well as in their damaging

or healing effects on others. Luciane is depicted as a garrulous, unseasonable, exhibitionistic, and willfully hedonistic presence in the novel, and would seem to be drawn from Theophrastus. She organizes and shows to advantage in the tableaux vivants (that became prevalent literary scenes after the appearance of this novel) because she is forced to silence her voice and master her impatience. These scenes of gestures caught and transfixed present story without explanation and event without motive (another kind of narrative embedding). To understand them one must work associatively, remembering and integrating a frame of reference, and inferring what the details of the image, the postures and the costumes of the characters are intended to convey. In this way they are broadly reticent, but they intend no secret, even if, in what they do not succeed in hiding, they reveal as much as language alluded to yet not spoken in dialogue. The observer can see everything that is presented, and linger over everything that is not as well. As so often in nineteenth-century uses of tableaux vivants, the narrator has an occasion to shift perspective on the "action," to increase or decrease detachment, polarize or unite characters or elements otherwise more separate, and frame a familiar occupant of a fictional universe in an unfamiliar or revealing fashion. Here the narrative's irony increases when Luciane, in her most successful

pose, keeps her particularly lovely back resolutely turned to the audience, thus allowing each to complete the imagined perfection seen only in part, and from behind.

As a character, Luciane illustrates the schoolmaster's comment, shaped by his experience with Ottilie, that when girls are educated for society, their inner needs are often neglected. In one of the many scenes of the novel that begins in a form symmetrical to an earlier moment and then takes a different trajectory, Ottilie is drawn into a competition of auras with Luciane through another tableau vivant. When the architect insists that only Ottilie alone must "act" in his representation of the nativity, she seems to add her own radiance to the scene. Yet, particularly when the schoolmaster appears, she is manifestly uncomfortable at having so glorious a role as the Virgin assigned to her--it is as unnatural for Ottilie to "play" as it is to be public. She isn't willing to greet her teacher, one of those who needs to see her according to his own idealizing desires, until she has changed clothes and can appear as her more modest self. The illumination of Ottilie's nature is a motif that shows also in the architect's chapel, where the portraits decorating it are pulled into a resemblance to her face. In the same spirit, in constructing the nativity scene the architect conceals the lighting, so

that it will seems to emanate from the child and Ottilie, in emulation of her radiance

Ottilie need only be present, and silent, to draw attention away from Luciane and the other women; she prevails by her doing, and from the time of her arrival on the estate she is observed and praised for her quiet skill in ordering the household to everyone's satisfaction. Lionel Trilling describes the Charlotte of Werther as appearing lovely in her domesticity and her doings, and quotes Florizel's praise of Perdita in The Winter's Tale:

> Each your doing,
> So singular in each particular,
> Crowns what you are doing in the present deed,
> That all your acts are queens.
> (IV.iv.143-146)

The characterization is even more apt of this later Goethe figure, and is made explicit in the novel. While Luciane is characterized as being sometimes graceless in her movements, and thus showing to advantage when still, quiet, and unrevealed, Ottilie carries her stillness with her in her motion, as she discloses her reticence in her speech: "Ihre ruhige Aufmerksamkeit blieb sich immer gleich, so wie ihre gelassene Regsamkeit. Und so war ihr Sitzen, Aufstehen, Gehen, Kommen, Holen, Bringen, Wiederniedersitzen ohne einen Schein von Unruhe, ein ewiger Wechsel, eine ewige angenehme Bewegung. Dazu kam, dass man sie nicht gehen hörte; so leise trat sie auf" (284; Pt. I,

ch. 6). This is the tableau vivant stripped of its theatricality, animated and set into motion by the inner scene it depicts.

* * * * *

We are brought back to a classical ideal of vision rather than a debased religiosity. A revealing statement in Bruno Snell's study of the Greeks relates to the sense of a life-giving interaction with a spiritual realm that informs Die Wahlverwandtschaften: "The gods of the Greeks are a necessary part of the world, and that is reason enough why they should not be linked exclusively with national boundaries or privileged groups. How could there be any gods but those whose existence is self-evident, inherent in nature itself ....Every human act betrays the vitality of the ultimate cause behind it"(25). Working some years after his most 'classical' period, Goethe has developed an infinitely complex dialogue of inherent faith confronted with tragic ignorance. Yet his idea of the daemonic, derived from the ancients he so much respected, Goethe had long understood as a strict principle that cannot be fully articulated and that mandates even unsought reticence:

> He thought he could detect in nature--both animate and inanimate, with soul and without soul--something which manifests itself only in contradictions, and which, therefore, could not be comprehended under any idea, still less under one word....It resembled chance, for it evolved no consequences: it was like Providence, for it hinted at connec-

> tion. All that limits us it seemed to penetrate; it seemed to sport at will with the necessary elements of our existence; it contracted time and expanded space...." (Poetry and Truth, p.423)

Fate needs only the simplest of means, and the most reticent, to fulfill what we come to understand about destiny, namely that it is intrinsic, part of nature, subsumed within the natural order of things and naturally working to its fulfillment.

Mistakes, then, are not tragic individually, only cumulatively, but there are outrages, small and large, quietly scattered across the surface of the novel, like the treatment of monuments that provides an invitation for transgression as well as an occasion for contrast. In order to make the cemetery more agreeable to contemplate, Charlotte has rearranged the tombstones around the perimeter of the churchyard, doing so even against the protests of an important family which (in a very modern way) sends a lawyer to protest the irreverence to their ancestors' memorials. Charlotte's act is an instance of asebia, of violation, for the specific location of each grave and the tombstones are handled as representations without value, as the paltry monuments of the unprotesting dead. (Snell 26).

In this, her misgauging of the powers she interferes with, Charlotte, like Eduard, subscribes to the narcissism of the present and its imperatives of fair prospects (Wellbery 292). She proceeds in the resolute

belief that she can keep in place the resonance of the past while uprooting its symbols and the individuality of memory they represent. The discussions between Charlotte and Ottilie around this issue include the architect but, in the manner described earlier, the "dialogue" is given through a series of reflections in Ottilie's diary as much as in reported speech. The two women do not fully speak to each other about the meaning of the incident. Ottilie describes the architect's actual violation of ancestral gravemounds to gather relics and images, and comments on the paradox of his collection. Her role in the novel is to point, sometimes without irony, to central ironies such as this one--for those with the greatest investment in the past, in one form or another, are the most careless of its prerogatives.

Ottilie's reflections on the subject of feeling and memorializing the past give an indication of the separate realms over which she and Charlotte preside. For Ottilie, who is all too aware of the rights of the present, does not, as Charlotte does, think in terms of concrete improvements as a way of suggesting continuity or permanence. In a critical difference, Ottilie views the inward reception of the message as the viable act of communication, not the articulation of its transmission. Thus she imagines a future life after death as inhabiting a fuller picture that leaves a more durable,

though ultimately transient, imprint than present experience. Cherishing the memory and image of the dead is a skill approaching the importance of living in the presence of the absent beloved. Both are characterized by wordless nearness, the sense of full and intimate communication. Ottilie's first meditation on the "die Erhaltung seiner Persönlichkeit nach dem Tode" (369) is placed in proximity, in the text, with her thoughts on the great significance of portraits, with which, as with a loved one, one can converse wordlessly, and wordlessly perceive relationship.

> Es gibt mancherlei Denkmale und Merkzeichen, die uns Entfernte und Abgeschiedene näher bringen. Keins ist von der Bedeutung des Bildes. Die Unterhaltung mit einem geliebten Bilde, selbst wenn es unähnlich ist, hat was Reizendes, wie es manchmal etwas Reizendes hat, sich mit einem Freunde streiten. Man fühlt auf eine angenehme Weise, dass man zu zweien ist und doch nicht auseinander kann.
>
> Man unterhält sich manchmal mit einem gegenwärtigen Menschen als mit einem Bilde. Er braucht nicht zu sprechen, uns nicht anzusehen, sich nicht mit uns zu beschäftigen; wir sehen ihn, wir fühlen unser Verhältnis zu ihm, ja sogar unsere Verhältnisse zu ihm können wachsen, ohne dass er etwas dazu tut, ohne dass er etwas davon empfindet, dass er sich eben bloss zu uns wie ein Bild verhält. (369; Pt. II, ch. 2)

Pictures in the mind have the force of nature--in Goethe's words cited earlier, "anyone who knew how to decipher them properly would soon be able to do without all writing and speech." Ottilie's thoughts here foreshadow and interpret the effect she and Eduard will have on each other by their presence alone, after she

has refused all speech. In her dreams of Eduard when he is at war, visions from which she awakes rested and comforted, the symbolic register of language has little place. Her hope, throughout, is in an unspoken blending with another's imagined or real presence, and the desire it fulfills.

All the interlaced relationships of the novel are included in Ottilie's invocation to reticence, to the conscious withholding of language that, finally, will allow what each character in the novel futilely desires--an end to separation:

> "Warum kannst du nicht sitzenbleiben?" dachte ich bei mir selbst, "still und in dich gekehrt sitzenbleiben, lange, lange, bis endlich die Freunde kämen, denen du aufstündest und ihren Platz mit freundlichem Neigen anwiesest." (375; Pt. II, ch. 3)

In Ottilie's vision of a still and silent gathering of the powerful dead no words are necessary, so complete is the recognition and so sure the value of each one's place in the assembly. Loving, wordless, respectful, final--a paradise of quiescent desires, where no need intrudes and no absence causes pain. After the drowning, Ottilie, feeling marked by a monstrous fate, cannot endure a return to society. If she must leave her barren idyll, she does so to endure the isolation she carries with her, and to contain what she cannot forget. Questioned by Charlotte, she explains, "Die Einsamkeit macht nicht die Freistatt," for until that final permission to be near what she loves, "Die

schätzenswerteste Freistatt ist da zu suchen, wo wir tätig sein konnen" (466; Pt. II, ch. 15). Not in words, or in isolation, but in doing, does she hope to find her sanctuary.

When Ottilie finally decides to return to the school, Eduard once more intervenes. Her response to him again brings in chaos and an end to her effort to find safety in work. Spirituality, like Eduard's "awareness," is another inadequate weapon, even for this most spiritually limned character. Only a total negation, of speaking, eating, doing--an unqualified renunciation of everything but her image of stillness in the presence and sight of the beloved--can end the struggle and satisfy her concept of fate.

When Ottilie returns to the estate, the four come together again, as at the beginning of the novel, only with each separate reticence confirmed. They act in harmony, are portrayed as gentle with each other, and harbor each a tolerant but divergent imaginative construct of what has and will happen. But this moment of equilibrium, unlike the first, which Goethe likened to a vat of fomenting liquid only temporarily contained before a necessary overflow, has each one, even Mittler, renouncing a personal desire in favor of an awed recognition of the forces that have shaped their lives.

Earlier in the novel, when explaining to Charlotte her excessively humble behavior, and her habit of pick-

ing up things dropped even by men (before whom she is expected to maintain her decorum), Ottilie recounts the humiliation of Charles I of England before his "so-called" judges. The golden knob of his staff having fallen off, no one stooped to get it, and he was left to collect it for himself. The anecdote has remained moving for her, and leads her to identify so with the suffering of that dispossessed, servantless monarch that her response has become habitual. Bowing to Charlotte's objection to the unseemliness of this habit, Ottilie agrees to forbear in the future, admitting, in a very revealing phrase, that after all, she cannot always tell her story--"ich...nicht jederzeit meine Geschichte erzählen kann..." (285; Pt. I, ch. 6). This theme is perhaps the underlying note of the novel's "shimmering elusiveness" (Boyle 5). Each scenario finds an unpredictable foreclosure, and every elucidation brings another reticence. The novel will not, finally, tell its story.

Chapter 3

Secrets of Excess

I cannot speak well enough
to be unintelligible.
Jane Austen

The idea of a reticent fiction changes shape in the shift of focus from a German novel of impressive containment, emerging out of an essentially non-novelistic tradition, to an English novel dense with conventions of genre and period. A profusion of incident, characterization and authorial warring with modulation further complicates the scenario. And unlike Die Wahlverwandtschaften, Brontë's Villette does not ensure a perfect narrative coherence at every moment.

Thus, it is precisely the effects of Goethe's subsuming of antagonistic elements and digressions within a surface unity that Charlotte Brontë refused--and by her refusal developed a strategy that enriched her narrative. As her dislike of Jane Austen's cooler skills made explicit, Brontë privileged passion over design. Her creation is deliberately autobiographical, not only in its plots and relationships, but also in its development as narrative, for in important aspects of characterization and incident, Villette bears resemblances to her Angrian tales, the spun out, extravagantly Byronic romances of her childhood. Charlotte Brontë

invites identification with her character Lucy Snowe seen as a narrator--one who engages the struggle with and for passion at the expense of linearity of plot or the architecture of formal containment. In her letters, the theme of not being made for the world recurs often--she writes of her difficulty in sustaining human intercourse, the fatigue that social activity brings, her susceptibility to a private sorrow incapable of solace through activity and the long torture of knowing that responsibilities to others, as well as her own nature, made any radical change in the conditions of her life an impossibility. "I do not much like giving an account of myself," she writes to a close friend:

> ...I confess I am too much disposed to be nervous. This nervousness is a horrid phantom....
>
> My life is what I expected it to be. Sometimes when I wake in the morning, and know that Solitude, Remembrance, and Longing are to be almost my sole companions all day through--that at night I shall go to bed with them, that they will long keep me sleepless--that next morning I shall wake to them again,--sometimes, Nell, I have a heavy heart of it. But crushed I am not, yet; nor robbed of elasticity, nor of hope, nor quite of endeavor. (Gaskell 377; vol. 2, ch. 3)

Overburdened with responsibilities and family hardship from an early age, the facts of Brontë's biography make us wonder how she derived the physical and emotional energy to outlive her sisters and brother and continue writing and publishing up until her marriage to her father's curate (which her father succeeded in delaying for six years). "Shipwrecks" at

home recalled her more than once to her father's hearth; this state of affairs is reflected in the novel's discourses portraying emotional foreclosure. Within the few years preceding the completion of Villette, Charlotte, the oldest, had lost Anne, Branwell and Emily, and had concentrated (in 1850) on bringing out a newly edited and introduced edition of Wuthering Heights. The work-intensive, emotionally solitary and physically isolated life she was thus forced into, coupled with the immobility that her father's continued dependence dictated, produced in her a habit of mind that united a boundaryless desire for extension into the world with a multiply framed concept of limitation. Brontë's fusion of shared and imagined identities, her own and her character's, helps chart the course of Villette, which does not always place its elements in relation to each other, but rather organizes episodes around the consciousness of its very anti-classical narrator.

The plan of the telling of Villette claims our attention as problematic from its initial hesitance in identifying the narrator (not named until the second chapter) or the narrator as heroine (not emphatic until the fourth chapter). The deferring, zig-zagging narrational strategy shows an unevenness that is both commensurate with the unfolding story and imitative of the narrator's rapidly shifting emotional states. Though

replete with uncertainties and sometimes suspenseful, the novel is not mysterious. Over the course of her novel, Charlotte Brontë reverses or recasts her plot and characters several times over, and while there is much doubling of events and natures, repetition occurs without symmetry. Villette obsessively returns to its themes--overtly and with suddenness--lest the reader forget that this is a novel about the self's intimacy with psychic trauma, particularized and dramatized through one overriding contrast: the world of the "ordinary," in which the heroine reiterates her guise of insignificance, and the world of the spectacular, which counters such claims with images that vividly picture her inner turbulence.

We know the spectacular by its figural presentation, its insistence, and its own peculiar elaboration. Using her heightened faculties for seeing to substitute for her own "showing forth" in the world, the narrator reveals and imposes her visions on the reader. The strategy of reticence in Villette begins by a diversion that privileges the narrator's characterological withholding of speech and her related status as onlooker with the right of narratorial selection. In announcing her identity, the narrator disavows what will indeed be one of her strategies of telling: "I, Lucy Snowe, plead guiltless of that curse, an overheated and discursive imagination" (15;

ch.2). In so doing--in alerting the reader by her denial to the active role that her "discursive imagination" will play--Brontë attempts to conceal the degree to which her novel is structured around its non-tellings. By overtly claiming that she will and must leave much of what she knows unsaid, Brontë's narrator chooses to interweave known deprivation "...that insufferable thought of being no more loved, no more owned" (223-225; ch. 15), with the further terrors that only become known through invention:

> the ghostly white beds were turning into spectres--the coronal of each became a death's head, huge and snow-bleached--dead dreams of an elder world and mightier race lay frozen in their wide gaping eye-holes. That evening more firmly than ever fastened into my soul the conviction that Fate was of stone, and Hope a false idol--blind, bloodless, and of granite core." (224; ch. 15)

Icy images of circular gaps, threatening and enormous in their obliviousness of her, dominate Lucy's fantasies. In her nightmare visions nothing is reflected back, and, as is so often the case in Lucy's descriptions of herself, no gaze can rest on her.

Holding herself apart in anticipation and dread of a harsh glance, Lucy Snowe hides--from both the glance she has known, and the one she hasn't. Intolerant of her push toward being seen, she divides her impulse in two. Lucy first turns to hyperbolic expression of lack to underscore her denials of need, accommodating her pride with idealized Protestant strictures. She also

wills herself to refuse the search for specifically human recognition of her own specifically human gaze--hence the plethora of either animal or inanimate metaphors for her instinctual life.

Yet there are moments when Lucy Snowe attempts to bypass the allure of that unattainable "false idol" whose worship deceives her through yielding to an opposite seduction of feeling her own strength; this is expressed with a less highly figured expansiveness of representation than she gives to hope: "My reader, I know, is one who would not thank me for an elaborate reproduction of poetic first impressions" (61; ch.5). But having arrived in the worldly thoroughfare of London, and about to embark on a voyage through desolation, Lucy Snowe lets the reader glimpse her temptations to enter a world of ambition (again by self-denial): "in a Babylon and a wilderness of which the vastness and the strangeness tried to the utmost any powers of clear thought and steady self-possession with which, in the absence of more brilliant faculties, Nature might have gifted me" (61; ch. 5). Here the imagery suggests a graspable antithesis between "self-possession" and the "vastness" of experience, and hence a "reasonable" agon. Lucy's powers may be "tried to the utmost," but in familiar, non-supernatural trials. In these terms, her desire to see the world is granted, and with retrospective pleasure, Charlotte's survivor-

narrator admits: "Prodigious was the amount of life I lived that morning" (65; ch. 6).

Though impression and reproduction, enormity of response and control by diminution, and "brilliant faculties" overcoming "steady self-possession" are modes embraced in the present-tense consciousness of the narrator, Lucy Snowe's narrative encompasses and reiterates a schema of ambition, and a horizon, broader than the one it directly represents. When the narrator claims "...I seemed to hold two lives--the life of thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter" (105; ch. 8), Brontë is instructing the reader in the reach of her extremes in narrative styles. Provided that the conscious shaping of fantasy can give form to a life that outwardly disdains artifice--for only Lucy's access to her fantasies distinguishes her from the merely anonymous, undowered creature she appears to be--both narrator and reader can rest content.

The alternations of consciousness thus refuse the clear boundary of Victorian novel-world circumscribing personal fiction-world, and make a demand on the reader. This is a kind of implied contract, which, on the condition of fantasy being "co-elevate" (Brontë's

word) with reality, permits the narrator to tell her story. When so multiplied through doubled characterizations and episodic oppositions, questions about the narrator's identity seem to overdetermine interpretation of the novel. Yet, since Lucy Snowe often decides to leave out what she is thinking or chooses not to pursue it, this appearance of a series of self-revealing voices becomes a semblance that she is obeying (or choosing to disobey) a novelistic version of the psychoanalytic "fundamental rule" [against self-censorship]. But paradoxically, her choice to know herself results in a noticeable reticence in articulation that productively transgresses novelistic conventions of plausibility.

Brontë invites her reader to take sides with her narrator's reticence, (just as characters in Villette succeed or fail in doing), and to see a strength in holding back worth the alignment of one's sympathies. She does so either through addressing the reader directly, as she does most notoriously in Jane Eyre, or through adventurous digressions to which the reader is privy, or through literary allusions. Even more persuasively, she instructs her reader alternately to pity her plight or admire her perserverance, and with her keep the pace. Most of all, the reader is lured into looking at the world through a series of keyholes, and specifically directed to see Lucy's others as she sees

them. To some extent, these are in general facets of fiction; in this novel, however, they are used extensively to meld the reader's mind with Lucy's, and in a Jamesian way, to refract the divination of a character.

The heroine who manages to draw together such varied constellations of characters begins her trajectory as an unlikely suspect. She is not beautiful, possesses no Greek, isn't anyone's daughter--yet knows something. She knows, for example, that the vision of her godmother's life is evanescent. She sets her own anonymous Englishness alongside solid Mrs. Bretton and her "comfort" of a son, John Graham, in whose home we first meet Lucy, and she allows herself the pleasures of characterization with their diminutive guest, the eccentric child Polly (who, on the departure of her father, Mr. Home, becomes passionately attached to John Graham). Metaphorically, literally, and in terms of following her narrative precedents, Lucy takes the establishment of Bretton as her point of departure. All four, in the second book of the novel, come together again (with Polly, become Paulina, the object of John Graham's intentions) in the fictionally scaled-down city of Villette, where Lucy, following a vague but decisive personal disaster, has gone as an exile to earn a living. On the ship crossing, Lucy has met her comic nemesis, Ginevra Fanshawe, to whom she is alike

in nationality and financial poverty, and with whom she bridges the gaps between her lost English world and the continental windings she attempts to follow. The French language they adopt when necessary both hides meanings (Ginevra goes to school at "chose") and comments on the ironies of each one's status (and the novel's). Both "study" at Madame Beck's school--Ginevra the arts of getting on in life, Lucy, now a teacher, the art of surviving the business of living. Three men and the figure of a nun cluster around them. The two women both have a "false start" with the same John Graham who has become a doctor in Villette; Ginevra initially disdains him while Lucy keeps "secret" from the reader that she knows him from her (and the novel's) past, and keeps "secret" from herself that she has fallen in love "uninvited." Both find other mates more suited to their natures. Lucy, in the novel's third book, creates an accord of sympathy and speech with Professor Paul Emmanuel, while Ginevra makes a match of equal complicity in appearances with an emasculated version of a courtier, de Hamal. All four of these characters interlace in their dealings with the Nun, who is both a resonating impersonation carried out by de Hamal, and a figure invoking a Gothic-style burial, a haunting (its intra-narrative history) and M. Paul Emmanuel's lost love (its affective memory history). As critics have pointed out, and

as this clustering of characters suggests, questions of "sexual slippage" mark the novel, and in sexual and narrative terms, "the specter of indeterminacy troubles Villette" (Crosby 710, 713).

The crossings of these characters and further personnages of consequence to them lead to a variety of resolutions--not only in terms of consummations, but in terms of narrative destinations as well. Paulina and Dr. John do indeed live on happily after; Ginevra, once married, continues to send Lucy an eighteenth-century epistolary account of life on the run from debts and inconveniences. In Brontë's hommage to Bernardin de Saint- Pierre's Paul et Virginie (1787), Lucy and M. Paul declare their love and separate on a night of almost tropical gentleness; the long wait, the storm, shipwreck and "Farewell" follow. Madame Beck and her confrères live long and prosper. These figures all converge and diverge in the pathways of the novel; tracing their intricate complicities allows an analysis of the novel's layers of articulation and multiple perspectives on telling a story.

My approach to Villette's secrets of speech, sometimes difficult to disinter from the seeming profusion of speakers and voices, will concentrate then on several categories. As I have begun to chart in noting the narrator's autobiographical links to Charlotte Brontë herself, I trace patterns of doubling within the

narrating consciousness, particularly as they reveal her ambivalences. These doublings, whether splittings, fantasies of enactment, or tropes, in turn draw attention to paralleled motifs and mirrored dramatic foils. Subsequently, I examine how issues of submission and dominance, often expressed in sequences of withheld speech, are enacted. Silent manipulation through exercising and being the object of surveillance, Madame Beck's dual role, is a constraining form of the voyeuristic. The related theme of looking for knowledge is countered by lavishly imaged spectacles of looking for pleasure (such as Vashti's performance). By such contrastive patterns, I show how the novel's discourse draws attention to artifices and disguises used to achieve prominence--whether personal, authorial, instructional or theatrical. These features are the pretexts for reticence, and its manifestations: in keeping with the overall narrative strategy, reticence is used in Villette to exactly oppose (by enlarging) what it directly accomplishes (by concealing).

Further, shifts in time perspectives--particularly character-in-a-novel time, for each character in Villette operates within a somewhat different frame--impress us with the asynchronous aspects of the novel, emphasizing as well the sense of reading time and its pleasures. Time-play serves the doubling strategy and constitutes another perspective of the reading, as does

the very skillful play of hiatus in the novel. The latter, gaps that take away or establish commonality of memory, place limits on knowability for both reader and characters. Finally, I show the function of symbolic signposts and passageways that reveal another layer of inner and outer, saying and unsaying. All of these perspectives orient, serve, cajole and, occasionally, seem to coerce a reading, despite their fragmentation of the telling of the tale.

* * * * *

The overarching idea of the world of Villette is thus its initial dividing up of its controlling consciousness into contrasting characteristics and personae. In terms of psychic conflict, the novel's doublings reflect Lucy's searches for correspondence on the imaginary level. The novelistic alternation in Lucy Snowe's hopes and fears eventually creates a new form. The unfolding story is her synthesis, the length of time separating its living and its telling the hiatus of giving form, and its fire the strength of its fictional invention. The extremes of Villette do indeed build power, just as they hide by hyperbole what they reveal by denial. Matthew Arnold's famous condemnation of the excessive, "convulsed" character of the novel notwithstanding, Brontë's voice enlarges the reach of the novel in its enactment of the contradictory motions of "terrors...suffered with a

troubled mind" (224; ch. 15). In Lucy Snowe's language, we can hear the oppositions between the tame modesty of happiness and the animal force and creature darkness of anxiety: "...my heart basked in sunshine. These feelings [of happiness and content], however, were kept in check by the secret but ceaseless consciousness of anxiety lying in wait on enjoyment, like a tiger crouched...I knew he waited only for sun-down to bound ravenous from his ambush" (82; ch.7).

Lucy's holding in abeyance of "the quick of her nature" (152; ch. 12) defines a state of mind as appropriate for the reader desiring excitement as for a character bred on reversal and a perception of lack, both within the self and within the world. Her character's inevitable susceptibility is partially described, with surprise that its logic is not more easily understood, in a letter Brontë wrote in response to her editor, who had suggested further delineation of Lucy's history and character (Nov 6, 1852). One intent of the letter was to instruct that Lucy's very name, already once changed from Snowe to Frost, be changed back again:

> A <u>cold</u> name she must have; partly, perhaps, on the <u>lucus a non lucendo</u> principle--partly on that of the 'fitness of things,' for she has about her an external coldness.
> You say that she may be thought morbid and weak, unless the history of her life be more fully given. I consider that she <u>is</u> both morbid and weak at times: her character sets up no pretensions to unmixed strength, and anybody living her life would necessarily

> become morbid. It was no impetus of healthy feeling which urged her to the confessional, for instance; it was the semi-delirium of solitary grief and sickness. If, however, the book does not express all this, there must be a great fault somewhere. I might explain away a few other points, but it would be too much like drawing a picture and then writing underneath the name of the object intended to be represented. We know what sort of a pencil that is which needs an ally in the pen." (Shorter 286)

Evidently, Charlotte Brontë had doubts about her ability to body forth that emotional fluctuation she describes above, and her double-natured representational project in limning Lucy's character works to assert that there need be no gap between her articulation and the reader's experience, since for her as author the novel is a complete representation. The "great fault" would not be a result of her own reticence, but of the reader's distance, like her editor's, from the novel's intensity. Such distance was conventionally unavailable to Charlotte Brontë; it is from twentieth-century perspectives that we are more willing to think of reading as an agon. On this basis, perhaps, as well as on the basis of a characterological stubborness, she denied his request for further substantiation of Lucy's vagaries and more external excitement in the novel. Nevertheless, in the way Brontë words her protestations to her editor, one sees evidence that she has some very nineteenth-century doubts about the expressability, or comprehensibility--

which is not clear--of the emotional experience involved.

The lines "...it would be too much like drawing a picture and then writing underneath the name of the object intended to be represented," ironically point to Lucy Snowe's efforts to do just that. As narrator, she frequently engages in the practice of captioning and framing her experience by naming it. Villette specifies the traditions within which it will operate--Protestant virtue, life-as-lesson, gothic "mummery" as compensation--indicating a life more commented upon and watched than absorbed. Chapter names, when not merely containing, can be instructive, introducing experience under the sign of excess or implicit, and often aggrandized comparison: the appearances of female uselessness or hypocricy in "The Cleopatra;" the power and danger of appearing and performing in "Vashti;" religious tyranny and superstition in "Malevola;" and the idyll of romance threatened by the gothic in "The Dryad." Throughout the narrative, namings, personifications and anthropomorphized disclaimers mark Lucy's "progress," (references to Bunyan are frequent) and can symbolize states of mind. The frequent and complex doublings and reversals of Villette suggest then, the strategy behind the embodied or framed labeling of any "object intended to be represented."

As we have seen, the figure of the narrator--powerful in her role as teller and central point of

reference, agonizingly deprived of power in her modeling of an unimportant woman's fate--dominates a reading of Villette's polarities. This contrast is emphasized in Nina Auerbach's discussion of Lucy's character as dominated by her struggle between the snow of reason and the fire of passion:

> ...it is a critical cliché that Charlotte Brontë is concerned with the conflict between reason and passion or imagination, but her use of these abstractions is defined by her peculiar imagery: the "cooler region" of reason or reality that follows the "burning clime" of impulse and imagination is not a temperate zone between two extremes, but is itself an extreme of deprivation. In Jane Eyre and Villette, it is equated with the polar regions.
>
> The struggle between the worlds represented by fire and ice underlies both novels, and their vitality comes from the energy of the battle, not from the fulfillment of resolution..." (196).

Auerbach further suggests that in the one present tense description of the narrator, whose hair has turned to "snow beneath snow," the fire is extinguished. "If either element finally triumphs in the perpetual warfare that constitutes these novels, it may be that 'la flamme à l'âme" Paul Emmanuel perceives in the young Lucy is put out at last" (197). This reading denies the implication of the narrative: Lucy Snowe has survived to tell her story, and she has done so by using her very reticence as a mode of self-empowerment.

That this is so can be seen as the polarities intensify, dissolve and reform with different exigencies as character conjunctions between Lucy and

her "doubles," and their doublings with each other, multiply. We first meet Mrs. Bretton, the possessor of "spirits of that tone and equality which are better than a fortune" (6; ch.1) and the healthy, well-balanced character Lucy will never be, or be like enough to claim parentage. Lucy cannot conceive of Mrs. Bretton as a mother in two ways at least; on a level of consonance, her balance is too alien to Lucy's bleakness. And in a sense, Lucy's allegiance is elsewhere. On a level of psychic symbolization, Lucy's depression expresses the felt presence of the always absent mother, permanently internalized as having been brusquely removed from Lucy's sight for a reason never to be fully accepted (Green 142-173). On yet another level, in this female, feminist and yet phallocentric world, only a beloved male child has a mother (neither Lucy nor Ginevra nor Paulina has an identified mother). For these reasons, Mrs. Bretton, though more central in the narrative for her functions than for her personal presence, makes possible the contrasts with Lucy's lack.

She brings into her home, along with her godchild Lucy, the child Polly, who will later reappear as the ideal of female accomplishments. Mary Paulina de Bassompierre Home, as we will meet her in the novel's second book, is a young countess, graceful and graced (yet in a seeming paradox the only person besides Professor

Paul Emmanuel who will seek Lucy's love). Paulina in turn combines the "fine flame" of her nature with an inviolable coolness of superiority, making her a more than adequate counter to the empty but appealing loveliness and liveliness of Ginevra (who seeks Lucy's companionship as well), the young woman Lucy will follow to Villette, and to a place in her school, run by the vigilant Madame Beck. Ginevra provides Lucy's longest digression of narrative. Having gotten her determined narrator into the pensionnat along with Ginevra, Brontë has a hard time disentangling her again--the oblivious, beautiful woman is not so easily intellectualized or disregarded.

Ginevra is an interesting crux in Villette, for she figures importantly in establishing the extremes of "old Diogenes," "old Crusty," "Mother Wisdom," "chère grogneuse" (123-4; ch.9), as Ginevra calls the Lucy excluded from frivolity yet despite herself admiring of it. But the Ginevra/Dr. John/de Hamal plot loses its pointedness, and at moments leads the reader to hesitate in embracing the fictional conceits that reflect Lucy's tortuous windings to hide her fondness for triangles. The embarrassment of response comes from the failure of the conventions used to describe these figures--or rather, the success of these conventions and therefore their awkwardness in a novel engaged in breaking them down. Ginevra is initially

the object of Dr. John's desires. When later she thinks that Dr. John really loves Ginevra, Lucy begins to apotheosize her, seeing Ginevra as a kind of Venus rising out of the mists of her school-girl ignorance, and guarded by a spirit "empowered...to gladden daylight and embalm darkness; the best of the good genii...canopied her head with his bending form. By True Love was Ginevra followed" (221-2; ch. 15). Through this maneuver, we see that Lucy needs and has a stand-in for her own love interest, and a permission for her own complexity (and mocking duplicity) as seemingly impartial confidant. Lucy will always use her status as knower to promote another woman into her own space with Dr. John, whether that woman is Ginevra, Madame Beck or finally Paulina, and only pushes Ginevra out by bringing Paulina in. However, she then will emulate Ginevra by forming her own triangle, and having two loves.

Since Paulina and Dr. John can talk, unlike Ginevra and Dr. John, Lucy loses her privileged position as a needed confidante, a position which has allowed her to watch Dr. John without his "seeing" her. Lucy becomes a friend to Paulina and to the couple, a far less compelling role for a narrator. Hence Lucy continues to lean upon, in every sense, the frankness of Ginevra's discourse. Ironically Ginevra is the figure in the novel who comes closest to being able to

live with and articulate her desires. Though Ginevra may use the props of courtship more coquettishly than Lucy, she is nonetheless more "honest" (as Lucy confirms) in that her ostensible and secret purposes are closely aligned. While willing to accept gifts from her "Isidore," as she calls Dr. John, Ginevra, in talking with Lucy, explains that she considers him hopelessly incommunicado in his sincerity:

> "I often wonder why I feel so very cold to Isidore, for everybody says he is handsome, and other ladies admire him; but, somehow, he bores me..."
> And she seemed to make an effort to reflect..."Yes!" I said, "try to get a clear idea of the state of your mind. To me, it seems in a great mess--chaotic as a rag-bag."
> "It is something in this fashion...the man is too romantic and devoted, and he expects something more of me than I find it convenient to be. He thinks I am perfect: furnished with all sorts of sterling qualities and solid virtues, such as I never had, nor intend to have. Now...it does so tire one to be goody, and to talk sense....I am far more at ease with you, old lady...who take me at my lowest, and know me to be coquettish, and ignorant, and flirting, and fickle, and silly, and selfish, and all the other sweet things you and I have agreed to be a part of my character....
> I find him at times as grave as a judge, and deep-feeling and thoughtful. Bah!"

He is, for Ginevra, no more than an honest, earth-bound bourgeois, much too stolid for her fancy--and therefore perhaps, we feel, rather inadequate for the other uses Lucy will make of him. In portraying Ginevra's frivolity and insignificance as making her unfit to assess Dr. John's worth, and with it the strictures of bourgeois life, Lucy only half suppresses her ambivalence

about that life, and the man who represents it. Further, because Ginevra is habitually unself-conscious, she is habitually observant. Lucy, self-conscious like the reader, needs all the narrative eyes in the novel to help her see the figures she idealizes. Toward the end of the novel, in speaking with Paulina, Lucy will once again use Paulina's vision to return to her own suppressed feelings for Dr. John. When pressed to comment on his fine looks, Lucy will finally confess that she no longer sees Dr. John, for that would be too great a punishment: "I mean that I value vision, and dread being struck stone blind" (616; ch. 37). By this image, Dr. John is linked to the figure of "granite" hope, indifferent to Lucy and unanswerable to her.

In the chapter "We Quarrel," the narrator once again establishes a parameter for reticence, this time matching voice to gaze. In this case, it is the condition for loving. Lucy can temporarily pierce the indifference and enjoy Dr. John's esteem and, most importantly, his warmth, for "he was the best companion in the world," providing she does not grieve him with her rationality. She must not disabuse him of his fancy, for to do so is to expose, to strip bare the substance of his illusion of loving, to rob him of his witchcraft. Without his desire, he is something of a shell. As Lucy makes clear throughout her narrative, energy directed by passion, whatever its aims, swells

the personality with power. Without this central focus, a man' power diminishes.

In the course of the novel, Lucy returns to the theme of whether or not she had correctly identified her own longing and the nature of its object. Musing over her relationship with Dr. John just before receiving Paul Emmanuel into her imaginative reality (in the chapter "The Dryad"), Lucy recalls "...my warm affection for him; my faith in his excellence; my delight in his grace. What was become of that curious one-sided friendship which was half marble and half life; only on one hand truth, and on the other perhaps a jest" (524; ch.31)? Lucy questions her own fantasies, and the fictions they have constructed for her. She has, we realize, engaged in a contest with her rivals Ginevra and Paulina not on the basis of beauty or station, but of narrative veracity and consequence.

That doubled rivalry pulls Lucy into displaying her androgynous powers in the amateur theatricals (in which she performs as a foppish gallant courting Ginevra). Here she champions the cause of Dr. John's rival, de Hamal, and in so doing has the satisfaction of playing at being newly seen by an attentive Dr. John. The oppositions here are interestingly constructed. First, the narrator calls attention to the vividness of this moment in her memory as opposed to her own subdued image in the scene itself. As the stu-

dents array themselves in "the Virgin's colours" for the day of "madame's fête," Lucy, more soberly attired in "dun mist," writes: "In beholding this diaphanous mass, I well remember feeling myself to be a mere shadowy spot on a field of light...but in this same gown of shadow, I felt at home and at ease" (182-3; ch. 14). Second, when pressed by M. Paul into placing herself in full view of an audience, Lucy has the secret pleasure of hearing him call her out of obscurity and say, "Play you must. I will not have you shrink, or frown, or make the prude. I read your skull, that night you came; I see your moyens: play you can; play you must" (185; ch. 14). Since her part requires male clothing, Lucy faces the threat of being dressed as a man ("something you must have to announce you as of the nobler sex") by another woman (a fellow teacher Lucy describes as snake-like in her false sensuality) and can only overcome what is being forced on her by making it more her own version of a suitably doubled script. Adding male upper garments that let her female skirts show, Lucy puts on a greater freedom than she has previously known--a male freedom. One more hurdle remains for her: "That first speech was the difficulty; it revealed to me this fact, that it was not the crowd I feared, so much as my own voice" (195; ch. 14). Throughout the novel, the implication is that not only is Lucy's appearance insignificant by her own rules--

inadequately female in her capacity to answer to a stereotyped desire--but that her speaking voice also is powerless to compel sexual attention (as distinguished from keeping order in a classroom). Trying to help Lucy speak on stage, in the same passage cited above, M. Paul ironically reminds her of her rehearsal conditions: "Imagine yourself in the garret, acting to the rats." Showing forth has a secret side.

One other character acts in the garret, and that is the mysterious Nun, who figures more in complicating the plot that in doubling Lucy with any substance of her own. This gothic intrigue plays at the idea of intrigue and slippages, establishing complicity between characters and allowing links between plots. It functions as well as an expressive link with Lucy's internal terrors of invention (Heilman 127-131). Further, because for Lucy and the reader Ginevra is linked to de Hamal, whose disguised way of entering the pensionnat has brought the impersonation of the nun into being, Ginevra also stands in relation to the nun's insubstantiality, as amusing to her as the "beaux fats" she prefers to Dr. John. The Nun will be explained away in one of Ginevra's letters, but not before being rendered powerless and literally rended apart when Lucy, returning from her drugged, nocturnal wandering, finds the empty habits in her own dormitory bed. A gentler but equally definitive closure deals with the subplot

involving the novice Justine Marie who once held M. Paul's imagination in thrall, but who becomes finally for Lucy and for M. Paul only a memory and a portrait. The Nun and the portrait are figures of grandiloquent and restrained elements that help articulate antitheses, such as that between Lucy's still inwardness and Ginevra's excited motion. And as has been pointed out, de Hamal's "proxy ends up in Lucy's bed," but by the process of metonymy so does Ginevra. (Crosby 708).

Lucy's refinding of Paulina and Paulina's of her childhood idol, Graham become Dr. John, brings to a conclusion the interchanges of Lucy's "romance" with him. Fittingly, the shift comes as a sequel to the "sublime" and "vile" spectacle of the actress Vashti and the threat of fire that ends her performance and brings the fainting Paulina and her rescuer Dr. John together. Lucy's self-denying has to cover not only being play-confidante in the rather easily dispelled illusion of love between Dr. John and Ginevra, but also acting as the unwilling subordinate confidante to a match between the graceful heroine and the golden hero that Paulina will help to ennoble.

Ginevra's lustre has dimmed as Paulina's has risen, and where Ginevra has been depicted only as a semblance of an enchantress, Paulina, as much as the actress Vashti, really contains that power to hold in

thrall. Like Goethe's Luciane, Ginevra has played the foil to virtues that are "of great price," and the images and allusions Brontë uses for Paulina, like the characterizations of Ottilie, suggest a vision of a woman "above her type." As in Freud's regularly disavowed but persistent characterization of the narcissistic woman, Ginevra (like Luciane), displays the makeup of the "purest and truest feminine type" (46), and therefore, Brontë seems to agree, satisfies a condition for the emergence of masculine desires. What is interesting in this configuration around Ginevra is the narrator's fascination with it. Not having known a male gaze, she begins her personal exploration of love's complexities by being rapt with a conventionalized male version of the desirable woman. In her need to see the world as men do, Lucy tends to see the objects in it from the point of view of masculine arousal--another point in the subtleties of her androgyny. Where shall this woman find her identity and center, without a real reflection in anyone's eye, not beautiful or rich, and nobody's daughter? Eventually, her answer will come through placing herself at the center of her own narrative; this however is a position to be earned as deviously as possible.

* * * * *

The quest for purpose that brings Lucy Snowe to a further stage of trials in her relationships in Vil-

lette evolves into an intricate testing of her own capacities. Initially, this is most clearly expressed through the vehicle of Dr. John, the character whom she unceasingly analyzes and who therefore spurs her self-reflection. Always idealized, he can never become fully formed in his own right. Consider his contrast with Lucy, who has already been established as an unwilling exile, from home, from Bretton, from England, Protestantism, and her native language. When Lucy finds herself alone and adrift in a foreign country, alone in a dining hall full of men, and alone in her isolatedness journeying to seek a port in the only place she knows of by name, the capitol city of Villette, Dr. John's firm step will recall to her these English touchstones. Upon her arrival, sans trunk, this right and necessary Englishman is passing by--but only passing by. Here, although we are in ignorance of who this character might be, we sense his sufficiency and self-sufficiency--his difference from herself. She therefore (not only because he is English) must request his help in her argument with the coachman. She persuades her rescuer by saying "I would do as much for you." If we look beyond the supposed predicate to this economically phrased proposition--"were I in your place and you in mine"--we find a series of other predicates that shape many succeeding chapters. For this gentleman (many leagues greater than that John Graham she

knew as an adolescent), whose countenance Lucy can read but will not profess to recognize, will guide her in the direction of a position and an identity at Madame Beck's school. On her way there for the first time she must physically pass through the necessary windings and turnings that are her portion as an unknown pretender to freedom, lost and frightened but daring to live "as if" more were possible. But from Madame Beck's, as watcher and confidant for Dr. John, Lucy will be able to "do as much" for him. She will do so in another kind of pretending: as if his interests were hers, as if she were he, as if he wanted her to care for and take care of him, as if he would want her to be taken care of if he knew his object of concern were alone and friendless, and as if she were another Lucy, one with her own understanding yet unhampered by her familiar rules of repudiation.

In her journey, Lucy finds an exemplary teacher, someone who can speak and act with a masculine indifference to tenderness (even, in several scenes, with her own children). Madame Beck is another finely-drawn complementary other who takes the stage. Reason tempered only by expediency and self-interest, practically defined, takes the voice of the school directress, the character modeled on the Madame Heger Charlotte knew, admired and ultimately feared in Brussels (where Emily and Charlotte studied, and Charlotte

taught at the establishment run by Mme. Heger). Because Madame Beck is a figure enhanced by her reticence, Lucy applauds her even while repelled by her. Different in the execution of her reticence from Lucy, in Brontë's portrayal Madame Beck is ostensibly antithetical in the core of her nature to the heroine. Yet, the school directress's is the only other eye in the novel as superbly attuned to tracking the world around her as is that of Lucy Snowe. Despite her scorn for Madame Beck's methods of surveillance, Lucy is drawn to admire her ability to say nothing and act to control her environment. To Madame Beck the world is a set of prerogatives to be wisely enjoyed; to Lucy the world at large has no obligation to make a place for her, and is propitious only to the suppression of her hopes, or the gratifying of them in a form difficult to recognize.

The drawing of Madame Beck's character prepares us to read the novel as a study in the suspense of telling partly through her involvement with the lines of instruction and theatricality that change meaning and direction over the course of Lucy Snowe's trajectory. In a study of authority and subversion in Villette, Joseph Litvak links Brontë's themes to her narrative strategy: "...since the novel interprets theatricality not just as a form of extravagance but also as a system of artifice and deception, the narrative itself may

properly be called theatrical insofar as Lucy Snowe deploys a whole repertoire of evasive and duplicitous tactics in telling--and not telling--her story...the novel's thematics of acting and spectatorship overlap and merge continually with its thematics of teaching and governance" (471). Madame Beck's surveillances, for example, form a series of plot "stages," sites of performance that are also passageways to be negotiated. Furthermore, even when she is acting, Madame Beck teaches (as when she heightens desires by keeping boys and girls apart at her fête). When she officially instructs a subject--and we are told she is very skilled--demeanor counts more than matter.

By contrast, Lucy Snowe's capacities to mediate the effects of her story are presented as being less consciously controlled. Her failures of nerve, represented in part by scenes (like those of "The Long Vacation") that parody and symbolize an inability to sublimate, allow her to remain in a state of unfulfilled expectation, a part emptiness that always leaves the greater part to hope, the lesser to experience. Expectation on one level allows suspenseful sequences to begin in the narrative, along with another, more intricately referential kind of suspense. Lucy's complicity with the reader begins to appear in a different light. It is, we sometimes feel, the reader who is Lucy's most potent antagonist, the reader,

hoping for fortunate denouements, ready for satisfaction of desires aroused and unwilling to grant Lucy her insistence on deprivation. This reader is what she must subdue if she is to avoid yet another external coercion in telling her story, and the reader who becomes the object of her continued surveillance and instruction.

* * * * *

Thus the performance by one reader for another of self-conscious acts of reading pervades the novel, reminding us, on one of its many levels, of the status of writing and the problematic of authorial identity. Brontë has previously used scenes of reading in her novels to anticipate and aggravate her relationship to the reader. In the chapter of Shirley entitled "Coriolanus," the book's "softer" heroine Caroline takes a reading to illuminate the brusque Robert Moore's self-appraisal: "'Here's Shakespeare,' she said, 'and there's Coriolanus. Now, read, and discover by the feelings the reading will give you at once how low and how high you are.'" Moralizing hides an effort to subjugate another's will. Here we see one way that Brontë intends reading to subdue the reader, framing her hero's wonders with wonders still more powerful--i.e., Shakespeare's--in their grasp on the imagination.

Similarly, early in Villette, the child Polly introduces the reader to the seductions of literature,

and upstages Lucy's sober reticence, arresting the reader's desires as she does so. She speaks a page as if from the Voyages and Travels of Sir John Mandeville (1582), although the more probable source is the well-known echo in Othello's justification "of arts inhibited and out of warrant" (I.ii.79), that have won him Desdemona's love:

> Wherein of antres vast and deserts idle,
> Rough quarries, rocks, and hill whose heads touch heaven,
> It was my hint to speak--such was my process--
> And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
> The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
> Do grow beneath their shoulders. These things to hear
> Would Desdemona seriously incline;
> ... and with a greedy ear
> Devour up my discourse. (I.iii.140-150)

Polly will love Graham as the gateway to the grand life of men who, like her father, go out upon the seas to a world beyond her small grasp. To the little Polly who will become his Paulina, Graham tells his stories, bewitching her with his seeming art, and instructing her in seeing him "writ large." She in turn recounts to Lucy Snowe in vivid, seemingly artless narrative, which Lucy privileges (saying explicitly that unless "kindled" by John Graham, Polly is uninteresting), the places she intends to visit with him, and the wonders he has told her of:

> 'Miss Snowe,' said she in a whisper, 'this is a wonderful book....This book was given me by Graham; it tells about distant countries, a long, long way from England, which no traveller can reach without sailing thousands of

> miles over the sea. Wild men live in these countries, Miss Snowe, who wear clothes different from ours: indeed, some of them wear scarcely any clothes, for the sake of being cool, you know; for they have very hot weather. Here is a picture of thousands gathered in a desolate place--a plain, spread with sand--round a man in black,--a good, <u>good</u> Englishman,--a missionary, who is preaching to them under a palm-tree.' (She showed a little coloured cut to that effect.) 'And here are pictures' (she went on) "more stranger' (grammar was occasionally forgotten) 'than that. There is the wonderful Great Wall of China; here is a Chinese lady, with a foot littler than mine. There is a wild horse of Tartary; and here--most strange of all--is a land of ice and snow, without green fields, woods, or gardens. In this land, they found some mammoth bones: there are no mammoths now. You don't know what it was; but I can tell you, because Graham told me. A mighty, goblin creature, as high as this room, and as long as the hall; but not a fierce, flesh-eating thing; Graham thinks. He believes, if I met one in a forest, it would not kill me, unless I came quite in its way; when it would trample me down amongst the bushes, as I might tread on a grasshopper in a hayfield without knowing it.'(39; ch.3)

This is the world to seek, of books come to life in the grander eye and experience of men destined to see its wonders. That this mild parody of classic nineteenth-century education for women is spoken by a six-year old to her fourteen-year old audience does not diminish its frame of reference. Rather, Polly's recital gives imagination and narrating a child's freedom of play even while it secures Lucy her rights of craftsmanship. These are the adventures, transposed to cultural centers and the influence of Europe and Catholicism, that will feed the reader's imagination when too long famished by Lucy Snowe's denials. As critics have pointed

out, Brontë has here and elsewhere used conjunctions of book and characters to "hint at future dangers" (Gilbert and Gubar 404). Later images in the novel refer back to Polly's (and Lucy's) age of wonder, and to the journeying that Lucy will partly accomplish under the protectorate of John Graham, partly under the agitated tutelage of Paul Emmanuel.

Polly's reading of her book mimes Brontë's narrative structure and invites the reader to see the schema of grand and restricted elements among which Lucy must thread her way. The passage which brings Othello to mind prefigures also the novel's treatment of the nature of the communication between men and women, and the source of love between them. Men can better serve as message bearers to women whose submission to language locates itself in them. It is a question, even for Lucy's narration, not of men in the world, but of the world in a man's speech. (Much later in the novel, when M. Paul has just returned from Rome, he will encounter Lucy in a museum and rail against her propensity to let her eyes stray from pious scenes of "she-hypocrites." Lucy can resist him, disparaging his pretensions, only until he begins to tell her of his life; then the seduction of the story converts her to submission.) Lucy Snowe will long to protect John Graham from any ill the world might hold for him, and speaks her love most fully in her wish to serve him and

help him tell, and understand, his story. Later, she will, upon learning that M. Paul has his own past despair and present intrigue, love him (become a heroine) and take possession of his story as she has of Dr. John's:

> She thank'd me,
> And bade me, if I had a friend that lov'd her
> I should but teach him how to tell my story,
> And that would woo her.
> (I.iii.163-6)

In Lucy's description of Graham, he journeys under a fortunate star; her timidity and hidden passion brings no enhancement to his story; for that she will need M. Paul, and Graham will need the recollections of Paulina.

* * * * *

All the major male figures in the novel are thus portrayed as worthy of love and sympathetic in their speech, or potentially so. Unlike Brontë's other novels, there is no unredeemed withholder of sustenance (such as Mr. Brocklehurst in Jane Eyre), or sadistic brother (such as the elder Crimsworth in The Professor). Fathers may be parodied: most forcibly Père Silas, as enacting the machinery of Catholic witchcraft, or Mr. Home, Paulina's father, as undone by the excess of their delight in their daughters. M. Paul, as the father-figure of the pensionnat, is initially parodied in his need for public self-aggrandizement, before being taken out of the register

of powerful, irascible father and being given a role as heart-brother to Lucy, belonging to her by affinity (and Brontë's editors note that she may well have been familiar with Die Wahlverwandtschaften and have found it pertinent to the depiction of this relationship). But the fathers are often missing, and generally not named, although their deaths sometimes occasion the events of the novel, and certainly of the availability of the heroine, and the subplots that engage her. It seems that Charlotte Brontë's four novels have "Oedipal" brothers rather than fathers. Even though the young Paulina's father is very much a presence, it is the strength of his presence in absentia that allows her to turn her devotion to John Graham. As we have seen, it is the brother figure, idealized when young, who takes the place of the father in the adult woman's eyes. The sibling, and through him a replication of an ideal family structure, is the locus of intensity in this novel. A hero such as Dr. John may be shown before his maturity, but from his initial portrayal he is fully developed as an object of desire.

Unlike Dr. John or even M. Paul, Lucy has never been seen with delight--she suffers the legacy of the absent mother and the marble-faced father/brother. As Ginevra states to Lucy, Lucy is "nobody's daughter," and within this fiction, the narrator is most shy of her own parentage, and therefore the more multiply

owned. Brontë's denial of parentage for her character is the novel's organizing act of repression--far more generative than Lucy's deliberately renounced desires. Lucy Snowe's excesses of denial overlay the obliquity of her repression. By confessing to know what she cannot have, she conceals her attraction to what she cannot know. For this ever-watchful character who defines herself by seeing and knowing what others do not, the defeat of moments of not-knowing (symbolized, as we will see, by the engrossing business of surveillance), those crucial intervals which the obsessed mind seeks to fill, is her triumph. The claim of not-having allows the genuine pretense of not-knowing, and provides the screen for her centrality in her own fiction-making endeavor. Thus as narrator, Lucy Snowe escapes the consequences of her denials, for she accepts the risks of becoming the pivot of her own history. Her reticence about how much she desires to be at the center of her own narrative, despite her claim that she is only an onlooker, has engaged the reader's complicity in the continual mise en abîme of the narrative.

The need to know and not know, and the need to enclose and refract and frame, justify the spying and concealing that occupy so much of the novel's plot territory. To know what departs from expectation, one has to know the expected sequence. Since the novel's

refusal is precisely directed against the expected sequence, its presence must be deflected. Episodes of differing varieties of surveillance, and the consequent indirectness and lapsus of speech, promote not a direct but a "surreptitious" discovery of pattern in this novel because of the circularity with which plots turn on each other. Surveillance, espionage, a kind of false suspense, and secrets all act as a way of communicating and interacting, and contrast to Lucy Snowe's long laments about the non-eventfulness of her life. Mirrorings through self-reflection and oblique reflecting, like portraiture, magnify and isolate features of experience, often in preparation to receive the force of the gaze. Clusters of information appear as not directly reported as seen with the eye or spoken with the word--but refracted through a mirror, spaced like the furniture, or named as an object that must be prevented from reaching its destination, like the little letter-containing casket. When Lucy sees that object being thrown into the garden and rescues it, she helps Dr. John protect Ginevra and begins her own complicity with him in a chain of surveillance.

In one such key scene, Lucy Snowe watches Dr. John care for Madame Beck's daughter, and writes "It was not perhaps my business to observe the mystery of his bearing, or search out its origin or aim; but, placed as I was, I could hardly help it." Observing a "mystery of

bearing" is precisely Lucy Snowe's business, however, and if there is any reward she obtains for abjuring so many hopes, it is that being so well "placed" to engage in that business, she is compelled to do so, and "could hardly help it." In the particular passage to be quoted, Lucy is staring at Dr. John because she has at last "recognized" him-- i.e., figured out that this personnage is one and the same with the Graham Bretton of her adolescence. The reader, however, is left to surmise the depth of Lucy's recognition, not knowing its referent until several chapters (and many shared experiences with Lucy and Dr. John) later. Thus, the sudden light that reveals Dr. John and the discursive theme of observation in the passage below both refer to larger narrative and psychic issues of seeing or not-seeing, of recognizing or not recognizing the other, and the attendant theme of personal worthiness of sight or over-sight:

> He laid himself open to my observation, according to my presence in the room just that degree of notice and consequence a person of my exterior habitually expects: that is to say, about what is given to unobtrusive articles of furniture, chairs of ordinary joiner's work, and carpets of no striking pattern. Often, while waiting for madame, he would muse, smile, watch, or listen like a man who thinks himself alone....He, I believe, never remembered that I had eyes in my head; much less a brain behind them.
>
> Nor would he ever have found this out, but that one day, while he sat in the sunshine, and I was observing the colouring of his hair, whiskers, and complexion--the whole being of such a tone as a strong light brings out with somewhat perilous force

> (indeed I recollect I was driven to compare his beamy head in my thoughts to that of the 'golden image' which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up), an idea new, sudden, and startling riveted my attention with an overmastering strength and power of attraction. I know not to this day how I looked at him--the force of surprise, and also of conviction, made me forget myself--and I only recovered wonted consciousness when I saw that his notice was arrested, and that it had caught my movement in a clear little oval mirror fixed in the side of the window recess--by the aid of which madame often secretly spied persons walking in the garden below." (135-6; ch. 10)

Dr. John, drawn into the novel's web of indirection and forced into counter-spying by Lucy's persistent stare, is somewhat annoyed, yet his response is to want to know what he has failed to conceal: he must somehow have been viewed in a bad light, and her scrutiny "must then be [of] some defect." That she might have power to arrest the counter-scrutiny and attention of Dr. John is more than Lucy will own. She will revert to the thief metaphor associated with her own "heart-poverty" to justify her refusal to explain what she has recognized:

> I was confounded, as the reader may suppose, yet not with an irrecoverable confusion, being conscious that it was from no emotion of incautious admiration, nor yet in a spirit of unjustifiable inquisitiveness, that I had incurred this reproof. I might have cleared myself on the spot, but would not. I did not speak. I was not in the habit of speaking to him. Suffering him, then, to think what he chose, and accuse me of what he would, I resumed some work I had dropped....There is a perverse mood of the mind which is rather soothed than irritated by misconstruction; and in quarters where we can never be rightly known, we take pleasure, I think, in being

> consummately ignored. What honest man on being casually taken for a housebreaker, does not feel rather tickled than vexed at the mistake. (137; ch. 10)

Lucy Snowe's "perverse mood" plots the novel; what she will not reveal to Dr. John, or claim to the reader whom she has quite specifically alerted, allows her to fill a pause with expectation. The terrain of her adventures begins to shift at this point, for knowing more than the other, she can "take pleasure...in being consummately ignored." Unlike Austen's Fanny Price, Lucy Snowe cannot choose to reveal herself based on an undivided following of her nature. Instead, free to watch and hold herself in expectation, with the reader "tickled" and "soothed...by misconstruction," Lucy Snowe's very noticeable reticence about her identity covers the aims in her secrecy and deception.

One of Lucy's deceptions in self-referentiality is her inability to leave her consciousness of herself behind for the duration of an outward fantasy. Even in a mirror, Lucy cannot see herself otherwise (and no more next to Mrs. Bretton at the concert than next to Ginevra after the play) than in her own prematurely achieved withdrawal from the possibilities of youth. Even Dr. John's glance must be refused as being mediated by something other than her own presence. Her recourse to an absence of reflection (symbolized by these mirror scenes) is an oblivion of knowledge as well as an invisibility to self and other. Such

invisibility is yet another aspect of her oft-noted doubling with Paulina, for that child, in relation to Lucy's previously quoted "self-analysis," is portrayed as "growing old and unearthly."

> I, Lucy Snowe, plead guiltless of that curse, an overheated and discursive imagination; but whenever, opening a room-door, I found her seated in a corner alone, her head in her pigmy hand, that room seemed to me not inhabited, but haunted...nights, on waking, I beheld her figure, white and conspicuous in its night-dress...praying like some Catholic or Methodist enthusiast--some precocious fanatic or untimely saint--
> This, I perceived, was a one-idead nature; betraying that monomaniac tendency I have ever thought the most unfortunate with which man or woman can be cursed. (15; ch. 2)

Whether she is suggesting that her own presence is a ghostly resonance in the novel, or that "unvarnished" narratives do not work, Brontë's narrator, in this passage twice "cursed," longs to be discursive, female and conspicuous; the reader's job is her beholding.

* * * * *

Having been compelled to watch as closely as Lucy herself, we know too much by the end of the first of the novel's three books, as if, once convinced of the necessity of Lucy's reticence, and the novel's consequent uncertainties, we begin to accept and even insist on that premise. Lucy Snowe's character has been defined and overdetermined, the oppositions of its themes established, its doublings set into reverberation. How the limitations will work themselves out remains open, but not the spirit of either transforma-

tion or resolution. The surveillance has been too successful, the reader too carefully sounded and prepared, the oppositions too finely honed. We have watched too closely, and like Lucy in some of her moods, long for surcease from articulation. One wants to put Brontë's enclosures aside and leave off being the object of her unrelenting voice. The melodic power of Lucy's arias of emotional penury have wrung the essence of her otherwise unsung, deprived life--sometimes, we feel, to its limit. But when the foreclosed themes gradually reopen in Book II, and the narrative quickens to life again, we begin to sense the design of the novel, and how reticently structured it has been all along. We are compelled to pay attention afresh, and read on. For what we thought we understood turns out not to be altogether relevant. The narrative will become as defined by inclusion as it has seemed to be by exclusion. Lucy Snowe as a person with a life, and a story, is resurrected out of the ashes of abstention. Absence, deprivation and certainty of loss remain dominant motifs, but the orchestration is filled out with a larger range of experience--art, learning and mastery, for example, are added into the repertoire of motifs. Lucy even admits success in her own voice when she writes a strongly worded essay against a form of mistreatment and hypocricy she has encountered. Overall, the narrative begins to conceive of what is absent

in less oppressive frames of reference, allowing the terms of desire and the necessary to change, and widen (Yeazell 173).

Lucy comes to be at the center of her own intrigue to have and keep Professor Paul Emmanuel only in the last third of the book. At this point we, and Lucy, are well established. The locales of Villette have acquired some spaciousness and diversity, the characters are set in motion on their differently revolving axes, and Lucy finds herself with more room to imagine and to see--even Madame Beck gives up restraining her movements. The keyhole perspective Lucy has learned so much from has become less useful. Lucy begins to move out of a private voice into one that will take pleasure in an expanded vista. Her new house will have a view of a public garden rather than a private one, and its few furnishings and accessories are described with a simple immediacy and pleasure. Having refused a series of "false paths," Lucy accepts an idea of contractual love, and with it the man who will allow her singularity. Conversing with Paulina, who expects to share with Graham "a beautiful life," Lucy clarifies their difference:

> I shall share no man's or woman's life in this world, as you understand sharing. I think I have one friend of my own, but am not sure; and till I <u>am</u> sure, I live solitary. (617; ch. 37)

With Paul, dark-visaged and as un-Grecian as possible, Lucy fantasizes no "beautiful life." Rather, he

offers to give her her due, and recognize her separateness. Since Catholicism has throughout the book been equated with the falsely feminine, gaudy and grasping, Lucy's triumph when she captures Paul's loyalty is that of a woman exercising her power. That Lucy wins him to the point of accepting her with her Protestantism is a victory of her hidden, "true" femaleness. He has made the effort to catch her meaning, and although he requires submission to his will (a condition of virility for all of Brontë's heroes), Paul will accept her form. Explaining her creed to the "Romanist [who] held the purer elements of his creed with an innocency of heart which God must love," Lucy, amidst the grandeur of their theological oratory, quietly gratifies her aim:

> He pleaded, he argued. I could not argue--a fortunate incapacity; it needed but triumphant, logical opposition to effect all the [spiritual] director wished to be effected; but I could talk in my own way--the way M. Paul was used to--and of which he could follow the meanderings and fill the hiatus, and pardon the strange stammerings, strange to him no longer." (606-7; ch. 36).

Lucy retreats behind the semblance of having too poor a voice, too limited a capacity of forcefulness, to argue, and imitates the depiction of her speech in the rhythm of this multiply punctuated passage. Overtly it is only with women, her model and competitor Madame Beck included, that Lucy claims strength in speech. Here, with her mate, a sign of recul is required.

Direct assertion in dialogue with a male voice requires a semblance of dependence in her own speech.

In narrating, Lucy mimics, as I have suggested, the forcefulness of a male voice when she describes the wiles used to seduce her into accepting Catholicism. She is first put through "a course of reading" and then shown the fruits of Rome. She refuses it by telling the reader, in colorful refutation of the "strange 'isms'" that Père Silas has imputed to her, about the Church's impostures of voice, and tellings of false wonders, and contrasts them with her Protestant mode of "honouring the Light, the Life, the Word" (606; ch. 36). Her skill in interposing her own version of the Word between that of M. Paul and his confessor ensures the latter's defeat.

Paul Emmanuel's voice emerges from its strident promulgation of the right way with increasing gentleness and simplicity. As it loses the veilings of Lucy's paraphrases, his requests for recognition are granted by the narrator, and Lucy, without ridicule. His differences from Dr. John allow Lucy Snowe to cease groveling, as she once did to find Dr. John's precious first letter to her. Where Dr. John once sent Lucy to hide her arousal in the garret, M. Paul sends her there to perfect it (before her stage performance). Accepting M. Paul's need to be seen and understood is a reciprocity Lucy willingly offers, for he cannot with-

hold his passions from her. As Lucy comes to know more of his story--his youthful passion for the cloistered Justine Marie, his protection of those he deems to be his responsibility, his explosive fulminations and unfailing integrity--he becomes for her that "Magnificent-minded, grand-hearted, dear faulty little man" (706 ch.41)! In the chapter entitled "Faubourg Clotilde," when Paul wrests Lucy from the prohibiting grasp of Madame Beck (who has worked with Paul's other Catholic confederates to prevent his liaison with Protestant, unsubmissive Lucy) and takes her to see the house and school he has, unbeknownst to any of them, rented for her before his departure, he explains to Lucy that his devastating absence and avoidance over the last days came from his inability to be in her presence and be silent. With her, he must reveal himself, even inadvertently, and Lucy allows him to do so without, as up to this point has been the case, deforming his language or his pronunciation of her name:

> "Mon amie," said he, "none knows what I have done save you and myself: the pleasure is consecrated to us two, unshared and unprofaned. To speak truth, there has been to me in this matter a refinement of enjoyment I would not make vulgar by communication. Besides" (smiling), "I wanted to prove to Miss Lucy that I <u>could</u> keep a secret. How often has she taunted me with lack of dignified reserve and needful caution! How many times has she saucily insinuated that all my affairs are the secret of Polichinelle! (705-6 ch.41)

The pleasures M. Paul alludes to take place in the silent spaces between conceiving of the message and

unfolding it (to the same person whose image originally led to the conception). The refinement consists in prolonging the expectation of Lucy's pleasure and his own. In the implied sensuality of this passage lies the justification for Lucy's "honest" response to this scene and to him: "You deserved candour, and from me always had it." Yet the finality of tense alerts us: the text is not yet complete, and this other, male voice will be silenced.

The pregnancy of such a gap and its sequel occurs repeatedly in Villette, and helps locate a primary strategy of reticence that Brontë employs: the devices of hiatus, direct and indirect. The several meanings given hiatus in the OED are helpful: "a gap or interruption of continuity in a chronological or other series; a lacuna which destroys the completeness of a sentence, account, writing, etc.; a missing link in a chain of events, etc." In a quote from 1797, we are shown an indication of hiatus used to signal potential: "It was printed in the usual Greek characters, with all the hiatus filled up by conjecture." Carpenter uses it in 1874 as follows: "A Material Instrument, whose function it is to bridge over the hiatus between the individual Consciousness and the external World." And in logic it is "a gap in reasoning or evidence." All of these senses figure in the narrative strategy, which continually creates bridges, hints at potential untold

stories (Lucy's long-unexplained white violets), elides evidence, marks a disjuncture of feeling or suggests the not-yet or the something more.

The passage that Virginia Woolf notices as a "jerk" in Jane Eyre is such a hiatus, but there are others Woolf remarks upon that are less "an awkward break" than a deflection of attention. Speaking of the narrator moving from one voice to another in Jane Eyre, going from looking out to the world beyond Thornfield to hearing Grace Poole, Woolf says "...it is clear that anger was tampering with the integrity of Charlotte Brontë the novelist....Her imagination swerved from indignation and we feel it swerve....We feel...a rancour which contracts those books, splendid as they are, with a spasm of pain" (72-6).

Countering the "spasm" are the novel's transforming trance states, its most powerful moments of hiatus, for in Lucy's wanderings through the city's commemorative festival, her drug-induced illuminated night, she tastes an ecstatic freedom, and feels briefly the trance-like incognito of lovers. (This state provides the most vividly realized scene in Hawthorne's novel The Marble Faun, when Miriam and Donatello traverse Rome in a guilty passion; Brontë and Hawthorne are related by their attraction to the suggestive powers of hidden knowledge.) Here, in a manner typical of Brontë's strategy, Lucy Snowe refuses to be recognized,

hiding herself where possible from any friendly eye. Her incognito allows the narrative to claim a more expansive voice, freed from defending its varieties of censorship. Here in the park, with its evocative replicas of monuments, she sees the characters whose complicities the narrative has traced. But strangely, in this trance state, she sees them stripped of many of her fantasies. The Homes and the Brettons are there, citizens out to enjoy the spectacle. And Madame Beck and her circle are there as well, seemingly at peace with the world. Drugged by Madame Beck to keep her safely away from M. Paul, Lucy instead finds herself emboldened. Under the guise of distracting from the circuitousness of Lucy's departure from the "convent" of her school, the narrator goes in search of a new field of action. Intended to prevent Lucy from further cognition, the drug has instead released her inhibitions and enhanced her vitality. Madame Beck, her enemy, provides her with the keys to another world of experience. Previously, the other kinds of "catalepsy" and "dead trance" Lucy has known have been those of melancholia and hypochondria, those twin maladies she is so attuned to in herself and whose rhythms of pain, as Virginia Woolf suggests, are replicated in her narrative style. When once Lucy sees the King, she knows him for one like herself, and the narrative pauses to delineate his character.

We only know that Lucy is traveling in the company of a new kind of fantasy when she is "pierced" by jealousy on seeing M. Paul with the young woman (actually his ward) she takes to be his betrothed. So directly sexual an emotion arises in its full physicality (Lucy's body has yet to be touched) for the first time. Like the voice in Emily Dickinson to which Lucy is sometimes compared, Lucy enacts her knowledge that "Renunciation is a piercing virtue" by embodying its contradictions. Her renunciations have run a gamut in the novel that, as noted, bespeaks an oppressive familiarity with the varieties of this particular Other, of all her personified Others the most possessive.

* * * * *

The landscape of her sometimes secret world has called on its own hieroglyphics for decipherment, and used personifications as inhabitants--Reason, Imagination, Fancy, Will and Memory hold the narrative firmly in their grip. They are signposts to a metafictional landscape of the unsaid, with the weather, sea and cityscape as settings which orient the reader toward the emotional tensions of the liminal. Further, as Lucy's wanderings have begun to lead out of the narrative foreclosure we experience so strongly at the end of Book One, the architecture of the city and its passageways has acquired greater definition and presence. Both on the level of a framework reaching back to a

literalization of an impressionable child's reading, and on the level of being driven to repeat the familiarity of a pilgrimage, Brontë's signposts recall the country and the literature of her origin.

The desire to find again the place once known never really leaves the novel. In the brief return-to-Eden episode (also a "trance" state), during Lucy's agonizingly slow reawakening amidst the furnishings of Bretton, the promise of domestic familiarity overwhelms Lucy at the same time as it encloses her consciousness within the tiny space of her recollection. It is a recognition scene of two kinds, for not only does she find the dear familiar around her in each detail, but she also sees the little portrait in the alcove, showing the young Graham she once knew, and over whose lineaments she admittedly desires to linger.

The going home, and the inability to do so, is thus part of the structure of reticence in the novel, a stubborn returning, again and again, to what is never adequately named or placed. The "argument" begins with Lucy's disclaiming of home, for what she came from is always left vague, and always portrayed as loss. What she goes to after leaving Bretton (like England, the good "island") is portrayed as the first of several literal and metaphorical shipwrecks. Here there can be no place of rest, only storm and misery, and the saga of no real return because no identified home is played

out in all the wanderings and failed homecomings that reappear in the novel.

But there are imagined worlds within this novel in which the symbolic resonance of the authorial voice is less hampered by the sadness of loss or the disguise of melancholy. In a novel with so many Shakespearean allusions, the altered and disguised Brussels comes to have magical properties. The city of Villette is hardly true to the conventions of a Shakespearean forest comedy, yet it provides a locus of magical doing. There is something of a gathering in Arden, however attenuated, in the way all the couples come from their different courts and kingdoms, with fealties high and low, to find their true mates and lost hegemonies in this foreign land. And embedded in the use of the city itself is "the metaphor of the "way" [that] is inseparable from all quest-literature, whether explcitly Christian as in The Pilgrim's Progress or not" (Frye 144). Though Brontë does not always sustain this level of analogy in her work, its use does indicate why and how her emotional and spiritual progress is linked to her narrative prowess.

In Villette's story of (almost) infinitely postponed gratification, we have marked the detours from directness. They lie partly in being unable to maintain a singularity of purpose in a statement that can hold its own voice throughout a succession of trans-

formations. Unlike some of the startlingly direct dialogues of Shirley, the most hyperbolic self-examinations and questionings in Villette contain escape clauses, if only by their excess. A passage from Shirley is useful for its contrast, particularly in dealing with a supposed male to female dialogue. One of Shirley's brother heroes warns his cousin Caroline, who loves him, that "Men, in general, are a sort of scum, very different to anything of which you have an idea; I make no pretension to be better than my fellows." Nothing in that novel persuades us that the line is not meant to stand (alongside many other characterizations of the male gender, some gentler, some more scathing in their ridicule); we are only surprised that the statement's directness is taken as hyperbolic male modesty, judging from Caroline's response: "If you did, I should not esteem you so much; it is because you are modest that I have such confidence in your merit." The dialogue is direct, but the characters are not speaking it to each other; they are instead stating the irreconcilability of their perspectives of difference. And yet, to some extent unlike the male characters in Villette, Robert Moore speaks neither as an idealized nor caricatured male voice; he is credibly self-centered and self-interested, but can be reached. Brontë's strategy in Villette in depicting the hidden strata of speech between men and women predicts (more

strongly than in Shirley), as do her narrative alternations, that the question can never be disengaged, and never resolved.

In comparison with Villette, the final resolution in Shirley seems like a fantasy recreation of the Brontë family--brothers falling in love with friends as close as sisters--a lost mother refound--hearth and safety. And, it is suggested, without hearth and home, loyalty and a master, a woman's life must be defined by what she does with these privations--how she handles her enforced silence in those areas where she might find fullest expression.

Harold Bloom points to the fact that the close of Jane Eyre finds the heroine perhaps taking revenge through her dominance over her Byronic but reduced husband while bespeaking a thoroughgoing anti-feminism, "bone of his bone..." (5). What neither feminist nor Byronic readings of this passage reinforce is that the novel closes with the permanent centrality of speech: "We talk all day long." Rochester in his dependent but manly state unites in himself many objects of love--siblings, father, child and even mother. Thus all forms of talk are possible with him, as Jane finds full freedom of speech--even an explosion. She becomes not only his eyes, but the translator of all senses into the missing visual one, and therefore also of the visual into the written.

The ending of Villette, by contrast, is an avowal of reticence, a permanent refusal to soothe through speech. The rapprochement that has taken place between Lucy and M. Paul is a tale told, and a stage passed through. With its successful completion the narrative needs either to cross into new territory or foreclose itself one last time. We have seen Brontë's choice in this. The tale not to be told will correspond to reality; it will never repair what is missing.

Chapter 4

Stilled Gestures

In the preceding chapters, I have discussed a work emerging from a tradition of restraint and one emerging from conventions of profusion. Both Villette and Die Wahlverwandtschaften are canonical works, however divergent they may be in their aims and means, and however far apart the levels of Romanticism, Victorianism and modernism they problematize. The kinds of reticence they permit discussing are aspects of dialogue, specific sets of familiar literary forms seen in relief. They are representative reticences which, finally, act to invite language and speech. Their foreclosures, as we have seen, silence the word to permit the discourse. Even where interpretation fails to ascertain meaning, as is the case with Die Wahlverwandtschaften, the chain of signs nevertheless gives a direction for speculation that returns the work, and the discourse, to its tradition, without making us labor to decipher that tradition (even if we must decipher the work). Not so with the works of Bresson, which perhaps belong to a genre that lends itself to altogether subjective and exclusive definitions--the art film. This term, however, is unacceptable to Bresson, a "solitaire" for whom "Films d'art ceux qui en sont le plus dépourvus [sic]" (Notes sur le cinématographe 122).

My discussion of structures of withholding in Bresson's films diverges from the previous chapters in several ways, as I have suggested in explaining my choice of this text. Certainly, a work that stresses the limitations of speech as communication asks for a less speech-oriented paradigm of interpretation, yet Bresson states clearly and in a variety of ways, "La plus importante sera la plus cachée" (Notes 42). In identifying what is important and what is hidden in a Bresson film, not only according to his ideas of those significations, the sense of what I call reticence must therefore be reevaluated, redefined and recast to show its centrality, first in another art form than the written literary text and then in another passageway of perception.

One can explain Bresson's fascination with reticence as a form of human experience and expression in terms of his preoccupation with the idea of a dieu caché, a god who has left conflicting signals both of the possibility of intercession and seemingly of the permanent departure of an intercessor. Implicit, too, in the aesthetic of reticence is the interpreter's ongoing anxiety about correctly reading the signs. Bresson's characters speak to an imagined ear, unavailable in the actuality of daily intercourse, and, possibly, unavailable in ultimate ontological terms.

Visual and verbal signals of non-responsiveness, non-comprehension, and non-action often indicate an

insubstantial presence, a destination which the symbolizations of language might, in the completion of an arc of communication, succeed in reaching. Through the lens of his camera, Bresson obsessively follows that arc:

> Ta caméra non seulement attrape des mouvements physiques inattrapables par le crayon, le pinceau ou la plume, maus aussi certains états d'âme reconnaissables à des indices non décelables sans elle. (110)

Bresson thus suggests in his writing, and brings to experience in his work, a precise film language of the ineffable and the immaterial. It is a language that operates on the premise that a spiritual absolute is always, by definition, on the borders of negation. These directions for interpretation--two situations for locating and reading reticence, created by one form of silence (assertions of what Bresson might be willing to call belief) and expressed through another (acts of refusal that cross the thresholds of certainty)--constitute the transpositions and trajectories traced in this chapter.

In dealing with this third text in my study, Robert Bresson's 1968 film, Une femme douce, a differently constructed prologue to an analysis of the work is required. For one thing, the self-referentiality and intertextuality in Bresson's films set up their own resonance, as I will show. The analysis of any one of his films also necessitates an

explication of his own idiosyncratic vocabulary of means to exploit the medium of film. This particular vocabulary must, as well, be placed in relation to the larger context of film traditions. Because Bresson's work has an important place in the canons of film-makers and film criticism, one might have expected his work itself to have served as a point of influence for other filmmakers. This, however, is one of Bresson's departures from the accepted sense and expectation of tradition. Bresson's work is cited, discussed, admired and treated as a category apart in film. His sense of his own separateness is everywhere apparent in his own writings, where the names that recur are those of Leonardo, Pascal, Montaigne, Racine and Debussy rather than any pantheon of other directors.

Thus, Bresson's lesser familiarity, both as an author and in the different creative conditions of his chosen medium, suggest that we situate his work within the modes of film narration and the traditions from which they emerged. Further, in the context of this study, it is significant that cinema as a narrative form is a uniquely twentieth-century development. The particular aspects of cinematic history from which Bresson emerged have been associated, like other avant-garde movements in the arts, with departures from conventions of form and content. Because film is a genre that concerns itself with expressive invention on the

one hand and with its own medium's capacity for polemic on the other, the history of film has been that of private vision intersecting with cultural engagement.

Cinema (a term Bresson came to reject because of its dual associations with the theater and with the star system of American and later European films) was the art that could be claimed as factually and aesthetically new, by nature as well as by definition. The medium itself exists only in so far as its possibilities are called up one by one. Each technical advance has expectably led to an entire syntactical repertoire, requiring a quickly increasing critical machinery in order to keep pace with the rapidity of invention being exploited. Like other innovators, Bresson thinks of his mechanical means, "caméra et magnétophone" as "deux machines sublimes dont je me sers pour travailler" (139).

Questions that were central for earlier experimenters in the cinema have remained vital for Bresson: first, what to do with the cinema's unprecedented possibilities for photographically exact reproduction of images and representation of spatial relations, possibilities that brought corresponding opportunities for total illusion, and second, how to deal with the expression of time through visual means, an effort that involved the complexities of sequence and simultaneity of image, and hence of montage and juxtaposition.

In a very different sense from his predecessors, Robert Bresson is most radical in the area of a seemingly mimetic presentation of reality--yet it is this very notion of mimesis that, in a non-theoretical way, he calls into question: "Puisque tu n'as pas à imiter, comme peintres, sculpteurs, romanciers, l'apparence des personnes et des objets (des machines le font pour toi), ta création ou invention s'arrête aux liens que tu noues entre les divers morceaux de réel saisis" (75). Juxtaposition and context, not attempts at imitating, yield a sense of the real. His polemic against the "vulgarization" of film through theatrical practices stems from the notion of falsely imitative representation. The camera will see only the "côté musée Grévin" (63) of actors conscious of their effort to draw attention to the expressive powers of their faces, thus emphasizing the falseness of the enterprise--"Rien de plus inélégant et de plus inefficace qu'un art conçu dans la forme d'un autre" (65).

In his search to create a purely cinematic form and an extremely personal visual style, Bresson takes narrative subjects that often have literary points of departure and which might be expected to translate into cinematic terms in ways deriving from the theatre. But, since Bresson so emphatically rejects the conventions of the theatre, he sees the attempt directly to

achieve an impression of realism through artifice (the technical capacity of the cinema to achieve illusion) as a contradiction in terms. Such a mimetic endeavor, as the quote given above emphasizes, can produce no more than the impression of artificiality. Only through a refusal of acted approximations of reality can any correspondence to truth be obtained. Throughout his work, he is very clear about the fact that out of what is not explained, demonstrated or realistically imitated, out of what might be termed a directorial stance that embraces reticence, a reality that transcends representation emerges. An audience not yet provoked, for which Bresson has little interest, is not in a position to grasp the "statement" of his film. But when forced into attention, that audience creatively perceives the distillation of reality taking place on the screen.

Pursuing this aesthetic, Bresson has also turned away from what have become the traditional film techniques, avoiding particularly the use of montage to create rhythm and eliminating the reliance on synchronicity of dialogue and image to suggest authentic experience. Bresson calls his work cinematography, which he distinguished from imitative cinema (12). As will be seen, his system has no place for a crafted expressiveness in acting, carried over from the theatre but almost universal in cinema, or for a literal and

logical approach to narrative and dramatic progression. An example illustrates in perhaps exaggerated form the temptation to "la terrible habitude du théâtre" (12) that Bresson has revolted against. In his discussion of the development of narrational styles in the cinema, David Bordwell gives the following example from a project by Eisenstein and Kuleshov, a structure designed to prepare actors for film acting:

> This building is a paradox, a theater that tries to overcome the heritage of the theater. There is a main stage with two others flanking it. The main stage rotates. The spectators sit on a central disc which also rotates, turning them toward the acting area at the proper moment. Walls may be opened to reveal the landscape outside. A bridge runs from the main stage into the auditorium, so that actors may come forward to play in "close-up." There is also a conveyor belt on which an actor can run in place or "pan" past the spectator. A "cinefied" rehearsal hall, in short, with all the perspectival assumptions of the traditional stage revised in the light of contemporary film practice. (Bordwell 12)

As his work moved away from these conventions, Bresson created an unprecedented and uncopied style--an iconoclasm no less radical for being without manifestos. In his films, innovation grows out of verbal and visual abstraction, and from a <u>décalage</u> of sound and image. André Bazin acknowledged the force and singularity of Bresson's work, saying that his procedure "was a matter of getting to the heart of a story...of achieving the most rigorous form of aesthetic abstraction while avoiding expressionism by

way of an interplay of literature and realism, [a procedure] which added to its cinematic potential while seeming to negate it" ("Stylistics" 131-32). Susan Sontag, pointing out the willed flatness of style and brief, seemingly unemphasized sequencing of scenes so effective in Le Journal d'un curé de campagne, observed that Bresson's was a "reflective art" that had created its own form of Brechtian coolness and distanciation in narrative cinema. (120-4)

* * * * *

These early appreciations set the tone for discussions of the films, but it is not only narrative abstraction that defines Bresson's film style. At times, his formal extremism approaches the level of parodic attack characteristic of a more blatantly aggressive stance in art. In his film Lancelot du Lac, for instance, the camera focusses almost exclusively at the level of the body's points of articulation. The eyes converge on knees and elbows, exposing the vulnerability and grace as well as the physical awkwardness accompanying the contact involved in both passion and conflict, even while the rhythmic compositions of images, reminding one of a Paolo Uccello canvas, maintain a visual cohesion. Bresson seeks the eye's formal perspective, in a lesson taken from Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks: "Comment se dissimuler que tout finit sur un rectangle de toile blanche suspendu à un mur? (Vois ton film comme une surface à couvrir)" (32).

Although, as will be seen, his films are intimately informed by painterly composition, Bresson is convinced that sound carries far more power than images alone:

> Du choix des modèles.
> Sa voix me dessine sa bouche, ses yeux, sa figure, me fait son portrait entier, extérieur et intérieur, mieux que s'il était devant moi. Le meilleur déchiffrage obtenu par l'oreille seule. (18)

Words too can have the force of icons. Believing that the authenticity of his relation to the text will emerge from the stripping away of all that is not essential, Bresson isolates significant words as well as visual elements. It is as if he would equate the texture of nature with the spiritual fullness of the minimal spoken word. Even the actor/model acts as logos, unconsciously bodying forth the power of that unspoken word.

The almost Racinian purity of intent that Bresson displays (he cites the Préface to Bérénice: "Ils pensent que cette simplicité est une marque de peu d'invention" [76]) derives partly from his early intellectual formation. Grounded in philosophy and classics (and the teachings of Catholicism), Bresson's early work in art was as a painter (Ayfre 139). He came to film along with that generation of directors noted for the opulent lyricism of their art--Marcel Carné and Jean Renoir among them. Bresson was notice-able immediately for his choice of spiritual and

spiritualized subjects (religious vocation and salvation in Les Anges du péché of 1943, revenge and forgiveness in Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne of 1944, suffering and grace in the two Bernanos films, Le Journal d'un curé de campagne of 1950 and Mouchette of 1966, the presence of evil in Au hasard, Balthazar of 1965), and for the unrelieved austerity of his style. In the following discussion, I will refer to some of these films, which predate Une femme douce, and situate them somewhat more closely. In particular, an understanding of the range and purpose of Bresson's austerity figures importantly in understanding his dependence on signs of refusal and incomprehension.

As Bresson disciplined himself in the use of a black and white film medium, he assumed greater control over each aspect of his films. By the time of his adaptation of Bernanos's Journal d'un curé de campagne, Bresson fully commanded the formal, minimalist style of all of his subsequent films. François Truffaut, writing in the Cahiers du cinéma, contended that the very specific relevance of Bresson's reflective, sometimes obscure version of Bernanos was far more faithful to the essence of the original than were the popular, psychologically explicit and dramatic literary adaptations of Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost (whose proposed screenplay of the Journal had been rejected in favor of Bresson) (Andrew 132-3). In Bresson's version, as in a

number of his later films, the priest's voice-over narration prefigures, echoes or contradicts the related scenes and images on which the camera rests. Text and image work disjunctively to force a continual process of retardation of simple emotional response. Bresson, in his quiet and severely demanding refusals, suggests "Bâtis ton film sur du blanc, sur le silence et l'immobilité" (137). Each frame, like the moment-to-moment struggle of the priest, requires a simultaneity of judgment, refusal and acceptance.

Educated with the literary text as model, and having had experience writing scenarios for the cinema before becoming a director, Bresson had worked with literary adaptations before coming to Bernanos. One of his early films is a crystalline rendering of the Madame de la Pommeraye episode from Diderot's Jacques le Fataliste, but for this film Cocteau had done the screenplay. Thereafter, in a manner that indicated his rejection of many of the traditional conventions of film-making (and his belief in a "confiance absolue en soi"), Bresson refused authorial collaboration on the scripts of his films, other than that provided by the text from which he drew his impulse. Another Bernanos work, La Nouvelle Histoire de Mouchette, provided the source for one of his films, and the transcripts from the trial of Joan of Arc another. These films draw on texts overtly concerned with the relationship of knowl-

edge and innocence to grace. When Bresson moved to the ambiguous, dense works of Dostoevsky, his films reflected their moral and spiritual problematic with an increased complexity of means. Bresson's 1959 film Pickpocket echoes aspects of Crime and Punishment, but Bresson did not assert or make imperative any more direct resemblance. However, he later worked directly with two Dostoevsky novellas--the early "White Nights," and the 1876 work "A Gentle Creature," that I will examine in detail. In each case, whatever the source of his texts, Bresson leaves behind all notions of conventional adaptation.

Much of Bresson's sense of literary treatment comes from his division of theatrical and cinematic ranges. Given his concept of the falseness of theatricality, it is easy to understand the automatic, flat response that Bresson demands from his actors. His depersonalization recalls early surrealist films, which frequently used actors not as such, but as objects to be manipulated by the film-maker's artistic will and sense of his own vision as primary. Bresson too is totally uncompromising in his control over his models. After using the brilliant but highly theatrical Maria Casarès in his film Les Dames du Bois du Boulogne, Bresson turned away from the professional actor toward less schooled "models" who had no identifiable stage personality to project. He requires

them to speak mechanically--not to interpret expressively the text they are charged with conveying. The correct intonation results from an unconscious correspondence, and not from an actor's attempts at inflection. "C'est de la contrainte à une régularité mécanique, c'est d'une mécanique que naîtra l'émotion. Penser à certains grands pianistes pour le comprendre." He explains more specifically:

> Un grand pianiste non virtuose, genre Lipatti, frappe des notes rigoureusement égales: blanches, même durée, même intensité; noires, croches, doubles-croches, etc., idem. Il ne plaque pas l'émotion sur les touches. Il l'attend. Elle arrive et envahit ses doigts, le piano, lui, la salle. (128)

It is not enough for Bresson that his models are consciously willing to look inexpressive; he rehearses them rigorously for months, making them learn to "equalize the syllables" until they are automatic and unself-conscious, insisting on an unreflective, absolute submission to the text:

> Soumets tes modèles à des exercices de lecture propres à égaliser les syllabes et à supprimer tout effet personnel voulu.
> Le texte uniformisé et régularisé. L'expression qui peut passer inaperçue obtenue par des ralentissements et des accélérations presque insensibles, et par le mat et le brillant de la voix. (111-2)

The models must move as unspontaneously as they speak. They approach or retreat from barriers or apertures, doors and windows, as if their gestures are no more than mere physical obedience to a decision that does

not originate within themselves. It is Bresson who moves these stripped-bare figures, not their own volition; for the director places his confidence in each one's particularity of presence and "instinctive" reticence. If "subdued," prevented from reaching for expressiveness, they will unconsciously reveal themselves. The models thus appear in their places in Bresson's underlying design because they are not forced actively to confront (and therefore deform) their roles. Bresson explained his rejection of miming in a discussion with Jean-Luc Godard as follows: "...there is an absolutely uncrossable gulf between an actor, even trying to forget himself, trying not to control himself, and a person, virgin of cinema, virgin of theatre, considered as crude matter that does not even know what it is and that surrenders to you what it did not intend to surrender to anyone (16)."

This rigorous discipline of style, and Bresson's obsessive relation to detail, led Eric Rohmer to speak of A Man Escaped as "the miracle of objects" (Ayfre 73). When asked by an interviewer why his actors walked about with their eyes cast downward, Bresson replied that they were "looking at the chalk marks" (Samuels 76). François Leterrier, a philosophy student who played André Devigny, the French officer whose account of his escape from a Nazi prison camp gave Bresson the basis for the screenplay of A Man Escaped,

has told of the difficulties and strain of working under such conditions of ignorance. It was only much later that he came to understand why Bresson had required so blank an obedience from him. Bresson's method relies on the complex syntactic possibilities of film, inexplicable except through the sequence and placement of the objects seen with the camera, i. e. through the totality of his construct. Conversely, the meaning of a sound or gesture only exists by its realization of a syntactic position--hence its unparaphrasability.

Space is equally abstract in Bresson's iconoclastic system. In recording the motions of bodies, Bresson trusts the eye of the camera to see what is not shown, and to reinforce dichotomies between appearance and meaning. The camera will often rest on an unoccupied space, framing the event architecturally before the arrival of the characters. And the camera remains fixed when the characters have left the frame, forcing a repetition of the event in the viewer's mind that is triggered by the suspense of hesitation. Every vacated space is filled by an immediate recollection; images pass into memory, giving space a voice.

The repetition Bresson wants is visual, rhythmic and ritualistic, having nothing to do with the logical progression of narrative. Bresson suggests, "Vois ton film comme une combinaison de lignes et de volumes en

mouvement en dehors de ce qu'il figure et signifie" (92). For him, an unadorned and even monotonous progression of gestures, with every moment and detail of equal importance, provides the possibility of moments of revelation. An irrelevant expressiveness would merely obscure the sequence of events that indicates the correspondence of what is filmed to what Bresson has imagined. As discussed earlier, we can find antecedents for Bresson's stress on the iconic value of gesture in Renaissance painting. In the study previously cited for its discussion of the reading of gesture by the viewer of fifteenth-century painting, Michael Baxandall calls the painter a "professional visualizer of the holy stories," who provided "exterior visualizations" (45). For a pious public, Baxandall explains, the corresponding activity was one of "interior visualization," a viewer's expectation of a personal response to the painter's iconographic cues. This public expectation was a kind of "institution" that painters could not ignore. Crucial in this context was the depiction of motion toward or away from an object of contemplation, devotion or fear. Baxandall quotes from a Renaissance treatise on painting:

> Movements of the soul are recognized in movements of the body....There are movements of the soul, called affections--grief, joy, fear, desire and others. There are movements of the body: growing, shrinking, ailing, bettering, moving from place to place. We painters, wanting to show movements of the

> mind with movements of the body's parts, use only the movements from place to place. (60)

The conventions of Renaissance painting are seen here as those of material and gesture toward or away from an object or person. They are thus expressive of "un état d'âme" rather than representative of specific characteristics of personality. A gesture of inclination, then, is what reveals to the observer the state of the soul, and what permits unconscious revelation on the part of the model. In his own reliance on the unconscious power of gesture, Bresson's radicalization of film conventions relates to these principles for confronting visual and verbal incomprehensibility. Because Bresson's style is so insistent that the viewer share his perspective, it is sometimes difficult to enter the spiritual terrain he charts, and in so doing yield to an "interior visualization." But his abstraction of gesture and motion puzzles the viewer into participating in the reading of the film, even while acknowledging the extreme ambiguity that lies between such strict parameters.

Mystery, which is always present in these films, has nothing to do with a suspense related to plot. Bresson refuses intrigue, interludes, direct correspondence and preexistent readings. We often know the outcome, the destiny of these characters from the outset, but this in no way prevents us from feeling the acute tensions of their struggles. The simplest ges-

tures receive the same concentration usually reserved in the cinema for dramatic conflict. In an unexpected parallel to the psychoanalytic situation, a continuous retardation of response and comprehension increases the focus and therefore the provocation of what is communicated.

These formal parameters of Bresson's style find affinities with the literary texts he chooses. Culturally and spiritually, Bresson is the ideal translator for Bernanos's texts. But there is a psychological aggression in Bresson's style that makes him curiously adept at interpreting Dostoevsky's world. Like Dostoevsky, Bresson reveals the intensity of personal narration as a record of and response to the emotional and psychological event. The excess of explanation and the repetition and regressive adumbrations of meaning to which Dostoevsky's narrators are so given find a surprisingly appropriate film language in Bresson's minimalism.

That monologue which never becomes dialogue is the actual subject of Quatre Nuits, made in 1970-1971 and drawn from the 1848 Dostoevsky story, "White Nights." An almost ecstatic poem of self-absorption, it is among the most lyrical of Dostoevsky's works, at moments approaching a warmly comic perspective. A dreamer, who speaks of himself in the third person, and defines himself as "a queer fish...an intermediary creature," one

who lives by the glowing or fading sunlight, sees "unfolding before his eyes patterns of an imaginary, marvelous life." He views Petersburg and its inhabitants as "new acquisitions" to carry off to his "den," and in the darkness and silence that comes when he is alone in his small room,

> ..summons an array of new ghosts... Loneliness and idleness excite the imagination. Then fancy becomes like a flame itself, flashing and flaring so that the book picked up at random drops out of the dreamer's hands before he has reached the third page. Now his imagination is again vibrating, and suddenly another world with a different life unrolls its enchanted horizons before his eyes. A new dream....A new dose of refined, voluptuous poison....the dreamer can have no desires, for he has everything; he is above desire, he is surfeited, he is himself the artist creating his life at every hour, guided only by his own inspiration.(25-27)

This man, this dreamer, interrupts a young girl about to throw herself into one of Petersburg's rivers, accompanies her home, and for three additional nights shares her story of abandonment and tells his tale of an imagined love, only to be left alone once more when she is reclaimed by her lover. The story is simplicity itself; its peculiar beauty lies in the extension, variation and rhapsodic rhythms of the narrator's monologues.

Bresson's challenge once again is how one films a voice. As always, the devices the filmmaker uses are simple, but the effects are overwhelming. Here however, the tone is lyric rather than severe, and the

film yields to its own beauty. Bresson's setting, contemporary Paris at night along the Pont Neuf, provides that community of the city that Dostoevsky's dreamer calls his familiar friends, those he knows by sight as he knows each house along his path. In a willing transference, we even become that community. We know quite well this nondescript young man, searching through the passersby. Like most of Bresson's heroes, he rarely speaks directly. Instead of addressing his thoughts to a journal or to a witness, as do narrators in Bresson's earlier films, the dreamer speaks aloud to a tape recorder. All of his fantasies, the litany of art and sensuality he makes of the girl's name (Marthe), the voluptuous reveries of his happiness, are entered and then replayed, again and again. He is interrupted only by a fellow art student who comes to discuss the need to move painting off the canvas in order to paint what is not there. The dreamer impatiently returns to his tape recorder, carrying it with him on buses and through the streets so that he can listen to his own voice building a world. When the dreamer is with the young girl, Bresson replaces his monologue with the sounds and sights of the city. The palazzo of lights and music the dreamer conjures appears as he describes it--but it is the bateau-mouche, gliding brilliantly down the Seine to Brazilian rhythms instead of the Barber of Seville that

Dostoevsky uses. A sensual perception of the film dominates the understanding and subjugates the "plot." Bresson seems to be using light to touch a source of light in the viewer's imagination. Light becomes not only a creative source, but the instrument of separateness as well, and as in Bresson's earlier films, the almost palpable reflection of an interior vision.

* * * * *

Within the framework of this study, Une femme douce, made in 1969, most directly confronts the problematic of the adequacy of speech implied in acts of reticence. Further, the reification of silence potentially involved in reticence lends itself to the kind of hierarchical ordering the director favors. Bresson's film takes on the role of stenographer that Dostoevsky assigns himself in the prologue to "The Meek One: A Fantasy" (more often translated as "A Gentle Spirit) which, because it so informs the narration, I will quote at length:

> Now for the story itself, I have called it a fantastic story, whereas I personally consider it highly realistic. There is, however, a fantastic element in it, that is, in the very composition of the story...
>
> The fact is that this is neither a narrative nor a collection of notes. Imagine to yourself a husband whose wife has committed suicide only a few hours ago by jumping out of the window. Her body is laid out on the table....He is pacing his rooms, trying to take in what has happened, and "bring his thoughts to a focus." The man, it must be said, is an inveterate hypochondriac, one of those who talk to themselves....He both justifies himself and accuses her, then goes

> into irrelevant explanations: coarseness of heart and mind is mingled with depth of feeling...
>
> ...The telling of the story...is disconnected in form, for he either argues with himself or addresses some unseen listener, a judge as it were. However, it is always like that in real life. If a stenographer could have listened to him and taken it all down, it would have sounded rather less smooth and finished than my account, but I do believe that the psychological sequence would have probably been the same. Now this hypothetical stenographer (whose notes I have given shape to) is what I call "fantastic" in my story....(268)

Dostoevsky goes on to compare his narrative "fantasy" to a similar "medium" used by Victor Hugo in Le dernier jour d'un condamné, in which the condemmed man is given "sufficient time," by Hugo's narrative strategy, to transmit to the last his experience. This "fantastic situation" yielded for Dostoevsky "the most beautiful and the most truthful" of Hugo's books.

The attraction of such a doubling of intercession for Bresson is perhaps apparent. The author takes on and proclaims the rights of recording and revealing (without himself having to judge) the meaning of the narrator's repetitions and incoherences. The narrator begs for himself not only his need and right to explain himself but also the possibility of guaranteeing a destination and a hearing for his incomprehension. So a Bressonian subject is approached: a vain desire for an intercessor who will answer the self; an obsessive who insists that he speaks reality when he is weaving a net of purely self-referential metaphors; and also a

heroine (already dead in Dostoevsky, living her death in Bresson's film) who will be denied and then negate her own right to speak.

In both story and film, the narrator is a pawnbroker who marries a destitute young girl, enclosing her progressively with his will, until her last possible act of grace and freedom becomes her suicide. The novella consists of the husband's monologue over the dead body of his wife, his memories, his effort to explain, justify and finally recapture an imagined reality through its verbalization, his only witness and ostensible listener the housekeeper. This figure of narrative permission, silent but presumed to be attentive, provides the window of recording for Dostoevsky's "fantastic" stenographer. In Bresson's film, the flat, perhaps uncomprehending impassivity with which she watches (although barely seeming to look) finally suggests a minimal degree of intimacy within the film's depictions of alienation.

Set in a present of the purposefully familiar St. Germain quarter of Paris, the film begins with the wife's suicide, showing first the housekeeper's clenched hands and the disturbed movements of the rocking chair and table on the balcony from which the wife has jumped. What we see are objects in recoil versus static objects (much as we will later see the husband approaching and recoiling from his wife's body), and

then the counterpoint and commentary of a white shawl (which takes the place of Dostoevsky's icon) that floats slowly to the ground in an untroubled arabesque. The external and "real" world enters with the sounds of cars braking, feet running, the startled dismay of milling passersby (we only see their legs and feet) circling the body with their curiosity. It is one of the girl's least private moments, when she traverses an orbit which notices her. As the narrator begins his own circling around her reclaimed body, we see first his back, the housekeeper Anna's feet ("He" and "She" are not named, as in Dostoevsky), and the end of the bedstead through the rails of which the dead wife's feet lie. The arabesque of white prepares us to see in the next frame a more literal iconic representation, for its gesture suggests the formal composition of depictions of the Assumption, but instead the husband's hands move aside the bowl with her blood.

Une femme douce alternates scenes of the couple's meeting and relationship--always in the film accompanied or cut into by the voice-over narration of the husband and the barest minimum of what might be construed as conversational dialogue--with his repetitive, uncomprehending circling around the rigid finality of her refusal. About this alternation, Bresson stated in an interview, "I want to understand death, and I hate flashbacks. There are no flashbacks

in the film, it is all the live husband now confronting his dead wife. Walking around the corpse, he says, 'I had only desired her body'--and there it is, dead."

All of the husband's attempts to subdue the spirit and will of his wife are documented by the camera, which tracks her almost silent figure with an oppressive, objectifying gaze. "She" has first entered the pawn shop to sell her few possessions in order to buy books. We notice her, although the camera does not linger on her and holds back from revealing her beauty, an attraction which slowly begins to speak (to the viewer) as her words increasingly fail to do so. When the girl, dressed in awkwardly outgrown clothes, brings a cheap camera, the pawnbroker begins his assertion of authority by mocking her; he tells his auditor that it was then he began looking at her "d'une façon particulière, que je pense à elle d'une façon particulière." The phrase determines every frame in the film. Rarely do we see both characters looking at each other at the same time. The camera obliquely shows one face in semi-profile, hearing or looking, perhaps, at the other. Instead of one figure receiving the focus of another, the camera follows the viewer following the impossible intrusion of one gaze, his, which we realize remains on her even when he shuts his eyes or looks away, even when she elides her look or her presence. This strategy is foregrounded as well in a lighter

moment in the film which typically both refers to the manner of showing their relationship and to its emotional tenor. While driving, the wife's eyes and the husband's search for each other and glance away in the car mirror, causing him to nearly collide with the car in front; both laugh, and the sound (which recalls their early sensual pleasure with each other and the husband's explanation that he threw cold water on this énivrement) lingers when the image has already become distant.

Even though the journey of the film seems delimited by its opening premise of the finality of death, the unexpected spatial articulation of the film creates suspense through the ellipses of the non-seen that correspond to the unspoken. The recurrences of narrow, bisected or multi-levelled spatial structures are stubbornly repetitive in the film; they irritate and provoke, for we are accustomed, as Bresson complained, to seeing filmed spaces attempt to approximate realistic space relationships. In those familiar spaces, the viewer's right to enter and look is taken for granted. Here we are deprived of that comfort, and the deprivation creates a suspenseful waiting for a return to more familiar grounds. We are continually sent back to an obsessive perspective that has an almost physical effect on the viewer.

The atemporal perspective of obsession is achieved through sequences that are kept from seeming entirely

like flashbacks partly because sequences in the present moment, around the dead presence, frame each "narrative" scene. and partly by the perpetuation of the sounds of the beginning or ending of each sequence (his shoes against the bare floor of the bedroom where she lies dead) while the visual image is elsewhere, on an outside view, a street or museum scene. These juxtapositions of perpetuated images are Bresson's formal equivalent for moments in the rationalized, interpreted history that the film's "he" imposes to cover and hide an unbearable reality. The pawnbroker is a character obsessed with reckonings, and as Bresson's repeated and detailed filming of his transactions emphasizes, he is a figure of financial exchange trapped by his efforts to transcend that status, enacting moment by moment the materiality of exchange. His goal, to amass sufficient wealth to exchange himself and be another in the place of another, allows him to have a set of illusions that his wife reminds him have a faulty premise. When he says "Nous vivrons tous les deux une vie nouvelle," she answers, "Mais nous, nous ne serons pas nouveaux." She is always laconic. Asked in the beginning of their acquaintance if she wants to keep the cross when he buys (and overpays) the figure of the icon, she says, as she will later echo: "Moi? Pourquoi? Non." In their discourse, as in the dissolving from one scene to another, there are no markers between present and past,

no signals that we are about to leave one dimension and enter another. Thus, stilled movement confronts constrained movement, and silence confronts reticent speech. While visiting the Jardin des Plantes the couple argues about his insistence on marriage, and the scene is partially shot from behind or within a cage. When the pawnbroker suggests that she reflect a bit on the desirability of marriage, she reminds him of its limitations, "Il y a aussi les singes." The next moment shows the signing of the marriage register--it is the event, not the drama of feelings, that the camera details obsessively. Periodically the camera cuts to the totally unreadable face of the housekeeper, or her kneeling figure or clasped hands. As the living witness of the couple's relationship, who is always simply there (and who, like the wife, is not allowed to leave), she provides the only possible figure of an external intercessor in this closed world. Her silence forces the husband to be his own tormenting interlocutor.

His obsession is specific--the misleading, disturbing verbal narrative of jealousy that is overtly sexualized in Bresson, a constant tension in Dostoevsky. For the pawnbroker, the girl's beauty is an impenetrable world. She comes to represent everything denied to him, and the isolation of his maleness. When they visit a museum together and she admires the

paintings of nudes (he watches her doing so) he interprets her pleasure as an instruction to read her sensuality as purely instrumental for him. Such misreading is characterological--his obsession gives him only the focus on gaps in his knowledge, and consigns him to an unsharable, self-referential prison. The community of men has already rejected him (his reputation has been destroyed by an act [military in Dostoevsky, financial in Bresson]) because, at root, he cannot distinguish the language of his society from that more idiosyncratic lexis within which he operates. That same community, in a multiple irony, would gladly take his wife, an unforgivable insult emphasized by her admirer in the movie theatre that they visit, or the former acquaintance whose advances her husband overhears her refusing.

In Dostoevsky's novella, as in Bresson's film version, the nature of obsession does not change because the quality of desire does not change. The inner states of the characters govern entirely their perception of the passage of time. Thus, for the narrator of Une femme douce as for the curé of Journal and the dreamer of Quatre nuits d'un rêveur, an internal dialogue that does not "answer" the other obliterates all time divisions. The girl's response to her husband's suggestion of starting anew jumps into the present with its directness, but even here she has in mind

a different desire, "Je voudrais autre chose." Her strategy of speech, as noted above, is oblique at its fullest, even when answering his insistent measurements by her contradictions--a look at him and then away, a monosyllabic refusal or an ignoring of his insistent questioning. The players in the production of Hamlet that they see shout, she points out, to avoid feeling.

There is a particular shrewdness in Bresson's limning the spiritual through the obsessive and possessive rhythms of the sexual, for both realms of experience converge on the question of knowing a possibly unknowable other. In exploring the most urgent and disquieting question of human existence--that of death--the film stages, in the sparseness of its stylistic means and textures, in the camera angles that emphasize the separateness of each figure and gesture, and in the withholding of any comfort of communication, the struggle to meet lack with fullness. In this way the framing of the narrative by the confrontation between quick and dead, in which the roles are paradoxically reversed, is the primary event.

When toward the end of the film, the wife asks what they are going to do, it is during the course of her reading aloud from a study of birds. The text on which she pauses to ask her question, to which at first she only receives a look in response, concerns the capacity of birds to sing: "Le pouvoir d'émettre le

chant particulier de son espèce est-il uniquement héréditaire chez le jeune oiseau où bien est-il appris...en imitant...." The passage continues by affirming that it is certain that the young bird possesses, through one of these means or the other, the predisposition to sing in the manner characteristic of its species. This moment, like her quiet singing when the pawnbroker is absent, is the closest she will come to articulating herself. The predispositions of her nature are her psychological determinants and her fate; she can no more regulate them than she can control the hazards of life that allow her to strike one of the notes in her repertoire rather than another. The repertoire itself she cannot change. This rather Jansenist position relies on the coincidences and distribution of occasions for action, an idea Bresson has described as particularly attractive to him.

As in this last sequence of the interrupted reading, the images of the film are often "set" to texts, as if the texts were essential accompaniments. From the beginning of the couple's relationship, the texts they could share seem to promise connection. In one of their initial encounters, the pawnbroker compares himself to Mephistopheles, "Je fais partie de cette force qui tantôt fait le bien," she completes the quote "et tantôt fait le mal." They are rehearsing a liturgy of "responsive readings," but henceforth the texts

diminish rather than increase communication. Aware but unforgiving of being composed of the same "matière primaire" as all other creatures, she is only able to glean from art; it is too distant to offer her a transformation. But texts, musical and painterly as well, allow her to be alone. When the pawnbroker once hears her singing, he is overcome at the thought that she has forgotten his existence. His "music" grates against the understanding, for his misinterpretations of her acts and gestures function like awkward refrains. In the sequence that precipitates her exile from her husband's bed, the husband has taken his wife away from her admirer's advances and she suddenly embraces him. He recounts, over her body, that he was sure of her love. The communion has broken down, both texts and images have become purely exclusive. By equally dialogic visual means, Bresson has avoided the conventional synchronicity of narrative and image that would lend a false logic to his world.

In a final example of the interchange of formal and psychological denials, just before the complete enactment of the suicide that closes the film, the wife sits before her mirror, looking at her reflection. Nothing else is reflected, no mystery, no answer, no knowledge, only her own finiteness, and with a single quiet smile (reversing the expected meaning of the look), the only one in the film, she rises to claim her

death. End and beginning merge perfectly. The viewer must be in exactly the position of the narrator at the end of Une femme douce, asking for one more luminous glance from his wife, even as she is placed in her coffin, a perfect severity of space that answers this uncompromising woman. The film's resolution is the equivalent of the black cross that fills a plain, white screen at the end of Le Journal d'un curé de campagne, in the moment Bresson liked most in that film.

Bresson offers the procedures of negation as gestures toward the infinite. Carefully crafted to make each frame undramatic and seemingly dulled in impact, the completed structure stands as a mosaic of refusals. Bresson's film on the occasion of death doesn't venture a single explanation or gratification of expectation. The characters, who at first we think might exemplify a type, belong less and less clearly to their categories as their repetitions accumulate. Since the structure of the film exists on the premise of the pawnbroker's need to deliver his "confession," we might expect his words to have a meliorative function. But at the one moment in the film, following the wife's reading about song, when he attempts to address her separateness and his admiration for that, he precipitates her suicide. Similarly, our expectations have been that the camera will show us this woman in order to tell about her. But the structure of the film and its resistances to disclosure counter the impulse to tell.

In the style of this beautifully wrought and colored canvas, as in his earlier black and white films, Bresson has not abandoned his initial search for pure forms of cinematic abstraction. Using such strategies as low camera angles and unvarying sizes of objects and bodies, he emphasizes the limitations on the viewer's ability to see and differentiate the whole field of vision at any one moment. Thus, through restraint, compression, unity and modulation of expression, Bresson has created a new film language that "has nothing to do with traditional symbols." (Biro 114) His obsession with the power of the camera is an effort to reveal what the eye doesn't see, a visual reticence that like a verbal one opens from its narrowness to an increasingly wide perspective. His aesthetics of essential presences puts closure only on the idea of psychological certainty.

Chapter 5

Temptations

> A girl cannot become pregnant if she cannot keep a secret.
>
> D. W. Winnicott

A psychoanalytic session begins with a few assumptions, on the part of analyst and analysand. The analyst, in a worst-case (most repressed and oppressive) scenario, assumes that a series of familiar moments (temptations) will occur. First, enter the analysand, whose general lines of thought are rather familiar, and whose preoccupations will be the subtext of whatever speech appears. I, the analyst, am the vigilant gatekeeper, ready to privilege what I take to be the operant set of preoccupations (to use a neutral term to refer to, say, the absent or unheroic father). I insist in my listening that this particular thought-set forms the patient's preconditions for speaking or not speaking, just as it corresponds to his/her preconditions for loving. Seduced by my own expectations, and following my temptation to embrace one or another version of analytic correctness, I listen for the tale told by these presumedly unconscious preoccupations, which I identify and track by listening for their avoidances and negations. Again, secure in the pleasure of thinking that I know, I collaborate in

marking the gaps in the analysand's text. I as analyst know those gaps, then, with more sureness than the analysand, for I claim to understand the "unthought" (Bollas) for which the semblance of not knowing or of knowing elsewhere or otherwise is a ruse.

The patient's reticence, like his or her garrulousness, I take to be an inviting bed-chamber, where I alone am the welcome guest. Thus, I, the tempted (and supremely reticent) analyst, belong where noone else is privileged to enter. I reverse Kafka's parable. The door that was destined only for me, that is to be closed by an implacable (and perhaps uninterested) doorkeeper, has been arrested in its motion of closure, and the complicity of the doorkeeper aroused. All this time (prior to the patient's entering the universe of analytic discourse)--and I acknowledge this by the fact of my own arousal at the thought of the secret--the patient's illusion of a structure of self-integration has presented a closed facade. My presence as sanctioned analyst reveals behind the facade a structure with hallways, rooms, interconnecting spaces heretofore overly inhabited and yet uninhabitable. I alone, enjoying the privileges of focus that Freud said were reserved for "His Majesty, the Baby" become the guest around whose presence, for whose eyes and ears, the interior is described. When, as I have been trained to think I can do, I refuse to

take possession of the centrality (authority) offered to me by the architecture of the chamber, although the psychoanalytic situation itself declares that space to have been reserved only for me, I bolster my belief that I have overcome my temptation--the presumptions that my understanding surpasses the patient's. In my abstention from gratifying my own disavowed desires on behalf of and for the patient's benefit, I relinquish my unique position, so I think, and restore (suggest) to the patient a state of safety in the long working-through of the (patient's) transference, his or her invitation to autonomy.

I draw on this anecdote because it points to the temptations that are powerfully present in the theoretical discourse of psychoanalysis and in the moment of connection between patient and analyst that has generated a metapsychological discourse. These temptations, which in turn have bearing on the relation between psychoanalysis and the literary critic, can be identified as follows: For the analyst, the first level of temptation occurs when he assumes success in finding crucial moments--of the patient's omissions, negations and other signallings of repression, and the resistances to the analyst's role and presence--that require interpretation and intervention. The next temptation is the analyst's supposition of knowledge about the referent of the gap that has been perceived.

The third lies in the fact that the analyst's own perception and determination of causality suggest that the proposed interpretation is a fully adequate one, one that satisfies his or her own imago as scientist and/or healer as well as the patient's needs.

This sequence, in all the crudeness of the reduction it invites, is the analyst's temptation into participating in the sexualization of thought and language assumed and presumed to be at issue in the analysand. These assumptions have behind them the analyst's diagnostic categories and what they might suggest: "The hysteric converts somatically, the obsessional into thought, and between the two the phobic is anxious. Libido is everywhere, but above all it is 'between'... It is question of binding an unquenchable libidinal tension, through meaning. The constraints of interpretation are born of the constraints of the libido" (Green 227). Green's statement, with some complex windings, might also be taken to imply that in participating in the process of crossing the thresholds of the patient's consciousness, the analyst's voracious appetite for the patient's language finds a multiple, libidinal gratification.

When the analyst succeeds in getting the patient to enter these (the patient's) libidinally charged silences, he or she may be tempted to consider that he has the safety of distance enjoyed by the literary

critic who persuades the text to yield its secrets. The analyst risks taking the quantity of material, the acuteness of interpretation and the "success" of reconstruction as suggesting an adequacy of interpretation. "When psychoanalysis fails to be scientific, it is seeking not so much to heal as to understand; it makes individuals the preliminary material for its construction. And this accounts for the indispensable role of interpretation, which becomes the fertile moment of the analysis, not only of course for the patient but necessarily for the analyst as well" (Roustang 139).

I call these risks to mind because a subject of reading gaps in literature invites a certain swelling of authority, and this is one link with as well as a difference from aspects of psychoanalytic thinking. The quote that follows is representative of the blurring of interpretative distinctions that can take place. The quote is drawn from Roy Schafer, chosen because he is an analyst intentionally scrupulous in his respect for patients (and for texts):

> Ordinarily, the analysand's professed intentions, while they must count for something, do not by themselves settle any question of analytic meaning or significance. Like any other text presented to the world, the analysand's text does not remain in his or her control. Once uttered or enacted, it becomes public property in the world of psychoanalysis and part of that world's possible histories. The analysand's declaration of intention is itself very likely to be taken as a text--for example, as defensive

> rationalization, a false lead, or a gesture of appeasement.
>
> At most then, the analysand is used as a consultant on his or her utterances, and the consultation is itself considered to be further interpretable text. For the most part, this consultation is not carried out under the aspect of privileged opinion or insight; it is carried out by way of the analyst's interpreting the analysand's further free associations. Thus, the analyst treats the analysand in the same manner that many literary critics treat authors--with interest in what the analysand says about the aims of his or her utterances and choices, but with an overall attitude of autonomous critical command rather than submission or conventional politeness, and with a readiness to view these explanatory comments as just so much more prose to be both heard as such and interpreted. (Schafer 176)

This passage, immediately followed by a disclaimer (it constitutes "nothing psychoanalytically radical" and is partly "an analytic truism" about "what is readily available consciously to the analysand") helps locate the site of the problem--or rather, dilemma. Schafer is working with the questions of authorization involved in relating applied to clinical psychoanalysis, with the view of establishing the principle of "only one psychoanalysis" meeting a variety of contents and contexts. In each case, if the analyst does not listen (and read) with on the one hand a readiness to question the literal and on the other a conceptual framework in mind, there is no ground for the analytic dialogue. However, if one does settle into the perhaps complacent analytic stance that Schafer describes, not only the patient's not-knowing but one's own knowing suffers an

inevitable distortion. As the anecdote of temptation illustrates, any postulate of knowing also implies, on the one hand, parameters for a set of potentially significant elements, and on the other, the complicity of sexualized knowledge. Yet Schafer's comment that the analysand can best be considered as a consultant on his or her own utterances ignores that complicity and seems to suggest that the autonomies of the literary text apply to the patient's speech, which takes its place, for better or for ill, in a psychoanalytic repertoire of "possible histories." Now, that is more or less true of all speech strings, even those of psychotics (where to study gaps is another approach to infinity).

But the recurrence of the literary text through readings gives it a different truth value than that possessed by the statements of the analysand. The recurrences of discourse, like its reticences, even in the fixed psychoanalytic setting, lose the possibility of fixed text status when closure is always in doubt. Simply put, we cannot so easily speak of withholdings of speech as textual deviations of one kind or another, within the context of the psychoanalytic session, because we have made a principle of refusing the idea of an established text that has its source in the patient's speech.

Schafer's assumptions have a particular goal--the authorization of the analyst in multiple roles: "To

take clinical analytic work as text interpretation is to establish the analyst as an influential co-author of the analytic text that is being interpreted" (177). On one level, this assertion is hard to refute, for without the analyst's presence and the patient's gleaning of his or her "co-author's" bent, the "analytic text" would not exist. Yet presence and authorship are no more identical than absence and non-existence. Perhaps it is more accurate to orient oneself toward the patient's "effort not only to speak of his dreams, his fantasies, and his sudden ideas but to work them out in order to recognize himself" (Roustang 139). Roustang is offering a valid "clarification." It is the patient's focus on his own language that is undergoing the revision of authorship, not the analyst's.

I have also quoted Schafer at length here because, unlike Roustang, he does not seem to acknowledge his Lacanian debt, yet gleans some of the authorial privileges it might accord him. His statements illustrate a particular Lacanian seepage in American psychoanalysis (as sharply distinguished from American and European psychoanalytic literary criticism). For Lacanians in practice, the unconscious in Lacan's senses is only called into being through the analytic dialogue. In the moment of lapsus that is the "psychic event," a French Lacanian writes (breaking down Lacan for an American journal examining transference),

...there is no such thing as one unconscious for the analysand and another for the analyst, there is only one unconscious involved in the analytic relationship....At that moment, practitioner and patient in all their differences are effaced in favor of a discourse that simultaneously seals their union" (Nasio 409). It is not clear that Schafer as quoted above means to join in the patient's lapsus, but it seems there is a move toward taking on some of the Lacanian prerogatives of "the one unconscious involved" in analysis.

Whether looking at the analyst as co-author or as privileged literary critic, the foregoing Schafer passage offers considerable latitude. The cited passages show the comfort of authorization that Schafer's (and Lacan's) stance offers the analyst. Yet the comfort these positions offer to the privileged analyst does not acknowledge the difficult and constantly shifting split between the responding/withholding analyst and the desiring/critical one. The analysand more than the analyst overtly submits to the structure and imperatives of the dialogue. It exists for the patient (one more reason for the patient not to tell, for he or she is justifiably suspicious of this supposed abnegation of equality in the dialogue). The responding analyst can perhaps tolerate the obliteration of his or her own equality. But the desiring analyst perhaps does not.

This desiring analyst, the critic-analyst, needs to rebel against a self-constructed theory as against

any law of the text. The analyst can reconfigure meaning, reconstruct the reconstructions, in fact play at playing. When doing so, this analyst-critic Schafer postulates, he or she ironically casts the analysand in the role of the naive reader, the representative of an earlier generation that receives the text uncritically. Although this is perhaps not his purpose, the authorization that Schafer lays claim to allows the analyst to fall into an idealization of his or her own role. Schafer implies here an ease in subsuming previous sets of analytic assumptions--a quiet Oedipal gesture that remembers that there is always a previously existing third, an authority against whom one hears (or reads).

Analysts, however, rarely move as easily through literary texts as critics do through the theories of psychoanalysis--one basic indication of the difference between an analytic and a creative text. In itself, this difference creates a gap in understanding, an invitation to readings of not-knowing and knowing that it would be interesting to observe more closely. Here, however, the difference serves to point up yet another aspect of the assertion of integrity that we have seen is at issue in the reading of reticence.

* * * * *

The permission to interpret in safety is the self-gratifying authorization about which psychoanalysis, as an enterprise, then, is reticent. What is at issue is

psychoanalysis's potential enactment of a very problematic premise--that the possession of language differs for the analyst and the analysand. The premise institutionalizes the not-knowing of the analysand and the knowing of the analyst, as Schafer suggests it institutionalizes the stance of the literary critic. The crux I am suggesting, where the temptation to "abuse" the text is at its strongest, is also the moment (as Roustang points out) most suggestive to the analyst of his or her own creativity. That is, for the analyst, the thought of creative and persuasive centrality in this chosen endeavor gains authority from the sense of possessing a key interpretative text hierarchically privileged against the patient's less coherent productions.

I have suggested that the analyst is tempted to think of being the possessor of the means needed to grasp an utterance from its point of origin to its unspoken destination. In the version given earlier of the scenario of privileged communication, the analysand holds the cards but cannot direct the game. But there are, conversely, the temptations of the analysand to be considered, for the analysand, like a narrator, also articulates a plot in which the perception of his or her own centrality changes, if not the outcome, certainly the reading of the plot. Among versions of the analytic fable which embrace the analysand's point

of view, there is one that perhaps comes close to resonating in the same way as the reticent fictions I have studied. Making vices into virtues, seeing "virtue" as essentially a reinterpreted reading of those same configurations seen as "vices," is perhaps an early, moralist model, and a writer's space of depiction, for the psyche's acts of balancing internal states and external relationships. The patient is tempted to "translate upward," to proclaim "vices" as "virtues" (in a way that bears analogies to the process by which the analyst "surreptitiously" acquires authorizations). And, by talking to an analyst who exists to hear that talk, the patient may come to believe that by talking alone he or she will undo the psychic disequilibrium from which suffering arises. To believe in speech in this way, however, means that the patient grows to believe that the analyst too must be as desperately attached to the patient's language as is the patient. The analysand goes through extended, exhilarating moments when it is reconstitutive of self-integration not to give the analyst what the analyst must want, and herein lies the creative impulse to elaborate the reticences. And of course, what is held back acquires value--in the senses of the ego's mastery as well as in the id. The patient learns to value the speech behind his or her own silences partly because the analyst is so attentive to its absence.

In this version of the imaginary analytic scenario, the seemingly powerless person has not yet discovered the seductions of being powerless and talking about it. He or she baffles the analyst, who is fatigued, vanquished by the patient's capacity for stasis in the face of so much invitation to become dynamically alive in the transference. (In theory, through the dyamics of the transference the patient will safely reenter the suppressive early dialogue that made repressions creative acts of survival, and "undo" not the repression but the need for it.) The analyst underestimates the patient's pleasure in succeeding, against the analyst's desire and even more against his or her own, in not telling, even while discovering a world of new pain in the telling. The patient can be like "an author without inspiration [who] never leaves the closed field of repetitive chatter," who is "like the neurotic who does not let himself be overtaken by the word, who does not lift prohibitions against speaking, so great is his need for mastery" (Roustang 140). By contrasting this framing of the analytic experience with the "parable" of the analyst's temptations, it becomes clear that the analyst runs the risk of reducing the patient--and the patient's text--to a cipher, while the patient runs the risk of never realizing the potential richness of that text.

We more than identify with this patient. It has become a particularly twentieth-century idea to reserve

unto oneself the right of self-definition (as a crucial aspect of the "need for mastery"). When a vocabulary of psychoanalysis as a means of self perpetuation becomes current in society and is taken over in ordinary language and finally codified in terms of a social convention, the space of the analytic session has been, we may say, architecturally modified by the nature of the patient's own authorizations to speak or be silent. The analysand may attend the session willingly enough, but that in itself gives no indication of the depth of resistance to undertaking self-exposure, self-revelation in a form which will cost the analysand his or her right of private self-definition. The allure that not-knowing carries for the patient is matched in intensity by the allure of believing he or she knows and can choose not to speak.

The temptations I have been describing cut across theoretical boundaries. Thus, to take approaches current in American psychoanalysis, the layers of embarrassment and shame crucial for Freudians, the self-object needs so much talked about by the Kohutians, the strength of the ego in its quest for mastery sought by the American ego psychologists or the positing of states of unachieved degrees of separation central in an object relations approach (all four of which could be usefully drawn upon in understanding the speaking subject who appears in daily clinical practice) are all

models with potential to situate and/or distort the event of the patient's speech. They can describe, explain or, more problematically, conceal--for the analyst and the patient alike--the patient's need to speak or refrain from speaking in an effort to organize a centrality in the self.

This lengthy excursion into some of the invitations to distortion inherent in the structures of psychoanalysis has bearing on the reading of reticence. Most simplistically stated, any model that approaches a text has necessary pitfalls, but in attempting to read gaps its seems that the pitfalls are exponentially multiplied. They offer, however, like "vices," the only possibility for "virtues" in interpretation. The temptation to interpret a silence, a reticence, is inevitable--one necessarily is tempted, and always "falls for it." And for the analyst, like the literary critic, the temptation to interpret is one that need not and cannot be avoided, only approached with respect for the fact that seductions are inevitable when the object of inquiry, the "desire for the desire of the Other," the adversary and the mother of speech are all the same source. That is, the job of the critic, and the analyst, is to find the right moments to give in to the moments offered by the text.

* * * * *

Such a moment occurs in psychoanalysis when a patient enters the session and says, "Either this is a

dream or everything else is," meaning on one level, as she gradually formulates it, that the language we speak together in a psychoanalytic session is one reality for her and the language she speaks in her "real" life is another. She is also suggesting that the versions of self she constructs through her language are the modes by which she deciphers the pertinences of her world. More embedded, perhaps, is the indication of the influence of her linguistic frames of reference in preferring and tolerating one version of herself rather than another. What language suggests to her is deeply implicated in whether or not she prefers one version of herself to another. My clinical hearing of her statement, spoken in the context of the particular conditions in her life and the course of her treatment in analysis, pulls me into an attempt to construe, at least for myself, the net of meanings her words might imply. Her statement can "suggest" considerable richness in her therapy if I construe "dream" with any of the resonances customarily associated with that word--access to the unconscious, richness of symbolization, the whole path of secondary elaboration and more. In speaking of "this," the life-context of her analytic session, the patient experiences the process of "translating" her reticence into a governing image of all that she struggles to say.

The fictions I have considered, like the patient's response, give a sense to and provide elaborations of

the perception of ellipses and discontinuities. They are enactments, translations of their own reticence to respond to yet another version of the self's story, and expressions of the reluctance to find a language that will be forced to give up the silences. These fictions' reticences yield a frame of suggestion which we then use to approach the text in readiness to interpret. And to some extent, just as the success of a reticent fiction depends on its self-authorization, our ability to interpret its suggestive power comes from our successive acknowledgements of its "dream" levels.

If we "translate" languages yet again, a quote about the most basic source of reticence may be in order. Ella Freeman Sharpe links speech and metaphor to the most elemental human functions, for as the child learns to control the orifices of elimination, speech is also being acquired:

> ...and so an avenue of "outer-ance" present from birth becomes of immense importance. First of all the discharge of feeling tension, when this is no longer relieved by physical discharge, can take place through speech. The activity of speaking is substituted for the physical activity now restricted at other openings of the body, while words themselves become the very substitutes for the bodily substances. Speech secondly becomes a way of expressing, discharging idea. So that we may say speech in itself is a metaphor, that metaphor is as ultimate as speech. (157)

For the patient mentioned above, and in a differently crafted sense for our authors, neither "dream" talk nor reticent speech can ever, then, be completely

singular in its referent--and silence never empty of substance. By the figure of synecdoche, the same is true of reticence, and of its uses of silence. Thus, it may be that just as speech, at its most basic level, embodies "feeling tension," reticence as a metaphor recreates symbolic gestures of delivery.

A notion of the "co-activity" of analyzing a work and its reticences, one which usefully "confounds" the basic sources of the text and its reception, can be found in the very creative work of Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel. Her discussions (which elaborate the intricate connections between idealization, impostureship, and the perversions) allow us to travel from the initial "outer-ance" of metaphor to the critical "outerance" of interpreting what is embedded within a work, with a range of psychoanalytic means called into play. Having pointed to the way in which the still theoretically confusing sequence of sublimation is entangled in the creative process, she writes of the capacity of the work of art to:

> ...take us in an instant through vast areas of the psyche and leave us marvelling at the wealth of emotion poured out through a whole series of condensed images that are spread before us, all issuing from primitive instinct. Like a deep-sea diver discovering a lost kingdom, the work suddenly illuminates the unconscious, and its light spreads right to the surface. Despite the immediate, global nature of the phenomenon, by breaking it down into its elements we can detect the displacements, the successive symbols and the condensed images which gave rise to the final, conscious form of expression.

> One of the main sources of the aesthetic experience seems to lie in the contrast between the wealth and multiplicity of the emotions, affects and images...and the simple, allusive, even elliptical nature of the expression. In short, a part of the satisfaction for the admirer of the work comes from this economy of means. (115)

The business of admiring the work is not far from the critical act of detection of the primary process for this analyst. (We are at an opposite extreme from the idea of "co-authorship." Instead, though this question could be followed up more fully, though not, I think, more conclusively, we have a refutation of any superficial authorization of literary criticism or psychoanalysis.) In the second part of this quote, the "wealth...issuing from primitive instinct" is specifically seen as gaining value through its "economy of means." The text is presupposed to possess an economy if we have responded to it; understanding the particular nature of the economy becomes a self-evident next step. Chasseguet-Smirgel goes on to describe another aspect of the text's reticence in which the creative product and the arousal of response are linked in their similar points of origin:

> Alternatively it may be that...the emotional impact can then proceed from this very exposure of the primary processes....
>
> Both economy of means and exposure of the primary process are missing from the work governed solely by the ego ideal. In this event the work will lack 'depth' (in the sense that there is a reduced 'backward-looking incline') and will not arouse in us the same wealth of emotions and images, arising from the primary instincts. (115-116)

The writer, like the reader, is affected by the primary process quality of the metaphors that govern his or her conception of aesthetic form.

The example that follows illustrates something of the dialogue of ego and ego-ideal that is one stage at which, for us as readers, the "primary instincts" become perceptible. Here, the nature of the particular aesthetic of reticence negates that interreferentiality of suggestion and association that gives pleasure, for as Chasseguet-Smirgel analyzes (in dealing with preciosity), sometimes in a work as a whole or in a characterization the sublimation can feel less "authentic." When this occurs, the impression of reticence loses rather than gains in radiance. In The Marble Faun, Hawthorne's heroine Hilda is presented as a figure in whom desire is whited out. Hawthorne portrays her as a pure (and therefore, we feel, fake or "split-off") embodiment of sublimation. She is ethereal in her presence, lives in a cool tower and walks unharmed through the corruption and pestilence of Rome, shielded by what Hawthorne seeks to portray as a gentle fastidiousness; she is loved by an artist who wants to sculpt her stillness. As a figure of beauty and an exemplar of the ability to perceive it, she is so idealized that the narrative positions her as a kind of nun in the service of art--a copyist. As a fictional figure of reticence, she is less than success-

ful, primarily because, unlike the vibrant Miriam of that novel, the other, "dark" heroine dominated by her guilty secret, Hilda is perceptibly not allowed to have anything to be reticent about. Hawthorne, attempting to make her a figure of New England equal in her Protestantism to match Rome, instead writes a treatise on the denial of the sources of energy in art.

* * * * *

I have spoken of reticence in relation to idealizations (of psychoanalysis, criticism and text) and the temptations they govern, along with some of the processes involved in notions of the ideal, as one direction of inquiry. The second aspect I wish to touch on relates to the role of silence in relation to the speech of negation, for the possibility of silence calls into question the meanings of acts of reticence.

When we look at the role of silence in psychoanalysis, where, as in fiction, it can constitute a decisive metaphor of fullness or a statement of irreconcilability, we turn attention to a moment in the session that comments on the validity or dubiousness of what has been or can be stated. In the quote that follows, the crucial silence is that of the analyst as the "'third person'... most often fantasized or hallucinated." Roustang (59) here conflates the abstention of the analyst from gratifying the patient's wishes with the idea that the analyst demonstrates

through silence his or her own as well as the patient's unconscious range:

> In order to avoid these subversive inferences [all that the words of the analyst assimilated by the patient have unconsciously carried], the analyst decides to be silent.... But perhaps this procedure is not as effective as it might appear at first; it fails to take into account that silence is a language that the patient learns quickly. There is such an abyss between the silence of death and that of life, such a difference between the silence of inattention and that of alert interest, between the silence of desire and that of impotence, between that of depression and that of continuous mania! Every silence has an intensity and a coloration that is perceptible to the patient."
>
> What analytic treatment sets up and what the analyst reinforces, whether through his speech or his silence, is an immediate relationship of an archaic, infantile, erotic sort....Every patient, whether he knows it or not, dreams of dissolving into or being engulfed by this silent or talkative womb which leaves him no autonomy. (59-60)

We are back to the overdetermining, through unconscious symbiosis, of the patient's ability to create though language and silence his or her own autonomy. In Roustang's fable, the analyst easily suffers being unendingly pregnant with what is conceived through the analytic process--the patient's almost orgasmic dissolving of accumulated desires into the analytic womb. In this version of the patient's not knowing the desire for the analyst's knowing, the "archaic" and the "erotic" character of the relationship bind the patient to the analyst's language (silences) more than to a language of the self. An essential, related reminder of the basic fact of the patient's reticence and its

correspondence with mental functioning comes in Freud's essay "Negation." Two givens are stated. First, "the fact that in analysis we never discover a "No" in the unconscious," and second, the fact that "a recognition of the unconscious on the part of the ego is expressed in a negative formula..." (185). The principal reiterated in creative texts and in analytic sessions is always that of presence signaling absence, and negation signaling assertion, but as we have seen that principle has been modified to include the imaginary quality of absence and the desire for the matrix that generates it.

Perhaps one of the most striking dialogues of presence and absence in psychoanalysis occurs in the configuration of masochism, where the body tells what language cannot yet find. The masochistic patient I speak of here knows she is there, that she exists despite the profound sense of annihilation that is her daily companion, through one radical means: she undoes the pain of separation though the infliction of more immediate physical pain, which brings her into contact with the absent presence of the mother. A patient who cuts herself, making incursions into the intact surface of her skin, is attempting to fill the gaps created by her failure of identification, to counteract the ego's disintegration through the rejoining, by pain, of mind and body. She is touching what is absent by forcing it

to "touch" her. Her only avenue to establishing the integrity of her own structure is to control in herself its violation. This patient's reticence to use language as her speech instead of her body is the way she negates (asserts) her presence.

As we have seen in the works studied, a writer too can establish integrity of the text through its violation. Thus reticence, in one of its many functions, controls that violation, serving as both the gap and the suture, and requiring the continual examination and reinstatement of the interpretative premises for understanding in the act of reading.

To give one last aspect of potential presences, negation, in the sense I have been using it, is very close to the "action of desire" discussed by Bert O. States in his study of the phenomenology of dreaming:

> There is even a respect in which the action of desire, as Lacan (or any psychoanalyst) conceives it, could not be detected unless it did not appear in a text, for the basis of desire is that it establishes itself in something other than itself. (200)

In his argument, States rightly points out that the dream is "processing" its materials, not repressing them. The dream, or the text, may be an object of censorship and repression, he suggests, but it is not itself an agent of repression. What we have seen in looking at the texts studied, however, is that the capacity to process the material of the psyche, to be the active source of a generative repression and its

expressive negations, functions creatively as reticence, as a system of "resemblances echoing and re-echoing over narrative time and space" (204). Desire, in all its analytic and creative senses, generates withholding and its multiple signals and negations; these reticent fictions fill the spaces they create.

Coda

The characters in these fictions and fictitious scenarios have a peculiar strength in common. They are all able to function, without speaking, with all the organizing power of a deus ex machina. Having once entered the symbolic structure of language, they cannot cease signifying. Their worlds are organized around the selves they don't articulate. To the extent the female figures of the narratives examined here are tragic heroines (or hysterics bodily fused with their conceptualized transgressions, or Roustang's creative neurotics), they will not brook being integrated into more prosaic discourses and contiguities. Ottilie teaches tragedy its figuration, Lucy Snowe searches for a fuller dimension to release her from a "groveling" hypochondria, and the "She" of Bresson's film steps into her fate like a bride attesting her virginity for the first and last time. Like the hysterics Freud wanted to unburden of the secrecy of their knowledge,

these characters, so seemingly beloved by their creators, earn by their embodiments the moral right to be understood. Dora could not forgive Freud that he rushed her into self-knowledge before acknowledging the particular burden she was carrying--the incursion of knowing the other's language silencing her own. Hence her repugnance (not cancelled by desire) at the failure of the father(s). The fictional characters portrayed in these works, like the analytic patients of a neurotic and hysteric persuasion, try to stand outside their own unconscious. They remind us that we would like to forget, perhaps like Freud with Dora, the force of the unconscious: that it is radical, perverse and explicit in its "unstable compromises, of varying degrees of intensity, between on the one hand, the force of language and sexuality and, on the other hand, the force of...the hypothetical or mythical site of the confusion of opposites" (Roustang 101-2)

Tempted by the intensity with which the evidence of this site appears to us, as Freud was by Dora, we set up shop to analyze what speech doesn't tell us in so many words. We think that "erasures" of presences must have occurred, that they belong to us, and, as is generally the fate of interpreters at some point, mis-gauge whether we are dealing with a dip or the abyss. The endless temptation to fill the gaps with the desire for the object of one's own desire has become almost a commonplace in our self-reflexive critical habits.

Beginning with an intention to be hermetic in one way in looking at the structures of reticence, the investigation has also emphasized the opposite of that intention: the fact that while we might touch a border between speaking and withholding speech at one point or with one moment of silence opposing utterance, the figuration of the boundary can stretch to an indefinite distance and limn an indefinite quantity of language. The focus on the workings of non-speech relates to all speech; writing about speech inhibitions as representations of forbidden objects leads inevitably to a discussion of our authorizations, literary and psychoanalytic, to write and to read, and to the nature of our permissions to speak. The forms of reticent articulation entice us, then, to embrace their ambiguities.

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