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THE NAMES OF THE NAME:

The Paternal Metaphor in Psychoanalysis and Literature

by

Ana Vicentini de Azevedo

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
The City University of New York

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Abstract

THE NAMES OF THE NAME:
The Paternal Metaphor in Psychoanalysis and Literature
by
Ana Vicentini de Azevedo

Adviser: Professor Vincent Crapanzano

In this dissertation I develop a comparative study of the psychoanalytical and the literary discourses with the purpose of demonstrating some of the multiple possibilities each of them can offer for the analysis and understanding of the other. It is a translation enterprise focussed on two main topoi (in the sense of both topic and place). The first one concerns the notion developed by Lacanian psychoanalysis in terms of the "paternal metaphor", or the general principle that presides over cultural, linguistic, and psychic structures. It is my general contention that this notion has been developed by Western literary discourse ever since its Classical times. In this respect, the second topos of my analysis refers to Aeschylus's *Oresteia* (458 B.C.), the text on and about which the comparative analysis is developed. Even though the backbone of my study is informed by the discourses of psychoanalysis and Greek tragedy, this dissertation is not primarily aimed at psychoanalysts nor hellenists. Rather, *qua* comparative study, it aims at using one discourse to think and ex-plain the other.

Dedication

To tio Duca, *in memoriam*, for having taught me the love for books;

to João e Gilka, my parents, for their enthusiastic support and friendship;

to Flora, for having affectionately waited for so long,

I dedicate this experience and this work.

Acknowledgements

First of all I would like to thank Professor Mieke Bal, with whom I began to work on this project at the University of Amsterdam. Through her steadfast and meticulous supervision, Professor Bal has taught me how the *croce* of writing can also be a source of *delizia*. To her supportive friendship in my time in Amsterdam and after it, I express my sincere thanks.

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In their own way, many friends have contributed with their support and commentaries. Among them I would thank Monica Calabritto, for being a tireless source of reference whenever I would stumble against my rudimentary Greek. Peter Naccarato has always been prompt to help me with bibliographical material and references. I am grateful to Pedro Sander for his insightful "tutotorials" on mathematics and computer language. In particular, I would like to thank Helena Sedláčková Gibbs, whose long friendship has been a constant source of encouragement ever since my arrival in New York, and who has been one of the few (penalised) friends to have read some of this material and sharply commented on it.

My deepest thanks to Professor Rose Zimbardo, from SUNY Stony Brook who, besides being my external reader, has also accompanied me since the qualifying exams. Professor Zimbardo's intellectual and human generosity has provided me with the necessary stimulus to carry on this work during its darkest moments. Her support, guidance, and friendship, to which I am deeply indebted, enabled me to finish this dissertation.

My special thanks to Dr. Paola Mieli, whose weekly seminars on psychoanalysis I had the privilege of attending in the past three and a half years. In addition to having paved my access to the painstaking complexities of psychoanalytic theory and practice, Dr Mieli has offered me "*el ejercicio generoso de la amistad genial*", as J.L. Borges phrases it.

Finally, I would express my gratitude to CAPES/Ministry of

Education in Brazil, as well as to the University of Brasília, for having given me the opportunity to pursue such a thorough training program.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Páthei máthos...

Aeschylus (*Agamemnon*)

*À peine avais-je fini, une fenêtre
s'ouvre à deux battants, vis-à-vis de
moi, au haut de la voûte: un torrent de
lumière plus éblouissante que celle du
jour fond par cette ouverture: une tête
de chameau horrible, autant par sa
grosseur que par sa forme, se présente à
la fenêtre... L'odieux fantôme ouvre la
gueule et, d'un ton assorti au reste de
l'apparition, me répond: Che vuoi?*

Jacques Cazotte (*Le Diable Amoureux*)

A(n Autobiographical) Note to the Reader

Within the parameters of academic writing, introductions have the status of a preparation to, of a preliminary step into the field about to be explored. I would begin by reversing this initiatory function and warning my readers to take what follows as a multi-faceted conclusion. "The gesture of introduction is in fact the conclusion of a long process of spiritual discipline...", Stuart Schneiderman correctly points out (1983:8). First of all, this dissertation is the conclusive formal requirement of an intense process of learning which has taken place in the

domain of letters, and has three solemn ones -- Ph.D. -- as its telos. Letters, then, inform not only the discipline to which my work belongs, but also the disciplinary means through which the right of access to the discipline can be granted. A Ph.D. in Letters is, in my view, above all a long process of discipline in and of the letter.

This is also a letter, a missive, or even an "MS. sent in a bottle",¹ which subsumes the personified figures of both sender and addressee in order to engage itself in a play of signifiers entailed by its three-letter telos (the Ph.D.). That is to say that this dissertation does not belong to me, nor to my readers, but takes a place, *qua* signifier, in the intersubjective network constituted in the course of its *parcours*. In the course of this letter, in the sliding of this signifier, other levels of meaning are articulated which thus destabilise the illusionary fixedness of the printed page. Like the hero of Cazotte's novel, in the search for answers to an initial question I have been confronted by other, more devilish ones. Under the novelist's inspiration, Jacques Lacan has expressed this reversal in terms of a circular formula, i.e., that the sender always receives her/his message from the addressee,

¹ This expression paraphrases the title of Edgar A. Poe's short-story "MS. Found in a Bottle", in which the "MS." is the only surviving testimony of an uncanny, deadly experience the narrator underwent on board of a haunted ship. I use Poe's story to stress, with Lacan (e.g., 1966:41), that a letter always reaches its destination, regardless of the forms in which it has been purloined...

in an inverted form (1966:41). This returned mail is assuredly more difficult and laborious than the writing of the actual letter. Nonetheless, to the immediate addressees of this letter, as well as to the others (and Other) whom it reaches out to, I would say, paraphrasing Petrarch that "...voglio che senza fatica si goda [quello che] non senza fatica io scrissi" (*Familiarum*, XIII,5).

The Bottle and its MS.

The above note puts in relief the domain of language that envelops my entire enterprise. The latter can be synthetically defined as an exercise in translation, in translocation, a transference; *in summa*, it is about taking one thing from one place to another: *metaphorá*, is what the Greeks called this process.² The focal point of my translation is the notion of the "paternal metaphor", as developed by the language of psychoanalysis, in particular by Freud and Lacan. The latter in fact proposes a metaphoric name for it, the "Name-of-the-Father", the *Nom-du-Père*, a term that encompasses a surplus of meaning,³ insofar as it refers both to the act of naming (the French *nom*), and to

² It is interesting to note that in contemporary Greece moving vans have written on them "*metaphorai*".

³ The idea of metaphor as carrying a surplus value is present in rhetorical studies ever since Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (1947), passing through Quintilian's *Instituto Oratoria* (1979), and reaching contemporary thinkers like Jacques Derrida (1982).

incest prohibition, to the "no" (the *non*) said to it. Furthermore, this trope, even though grounded on the father-figure, should not be taken literally. The Name-of-the-Father is a linguistic topos and, as such, can be occupied by various agents that extrapolate the social or biological father.

It is my general contention that this notion, however, is not a prerogative of the psychoanalytic domain, but has been elaborated or, more accurately, is being written by various instances of the literary discourse.⁴ What the former does is to conceptualise a *fortiori* an idea that the latter has held forth for millennia, as I intend to demonstrate. In other words, in-keeping with its status as a theoretical language, psychoanalysis aims at providing this idea with a general validity, i.e., to turn it into a concept, and to inscribe it into its overall theoretical postulations. Fictional discourse, in its turn, rather than condensing the idea under a general term, i.e., rather than attempting to conceptualise it, performs the opposite operation: it expands, it narrates the coming into being of this idea in a tale composed of characters, plot, space and time.

These paths, however, are but apparently opposed. In

⁴ The notion of discourse is used here in its Foucauldian sense, i.e., as a group of statements which have to be understood in terms of their own particular laws. "Discourse must be treated as and when it occurs", observes Foucault (1972:25).

"The Epistemology of Metaphor", Paul de Man argues that a theory of knowledge, and of the mind is, in a last analysis, a theory of language, of the sign. Due to the latter's arbitrary composition, epistemology cannot claim to grasp the "proper" meaning of a given idea: "properties", he writes, "do not properly totalize, or, rather, they totalize in a haphazard way. It is indeed not a question of ontology... but of authority, of things as they are decreed to be" (1978:19). The presence of the linguistic arbiter, i.e., the arbitrariness of the sign, ensues the fundamental chiasmus through which de Man identifies the constitutive feature of concepts, i.e., that they "are tropes and tropes are concepts" (1978:23).

In this light, the condensating, generalising effect attempted by the conceptual activity can be seen as actually resting on a metaphoric operation, on the production of a sign that carries more than its "proper" meaning. If figurality is a constitutive trait of (conceptual) language, it acquires a full-fledged presence in the literary one. Or, with de Man, if it is "a recognized source of embarrassment for philosophical discourse" (1978:13), for the literary it becomes a major source of its specificity, albeit the attempt Wayne Booth sees in parts of literary criticism to "clean out the rhetorical impurities from the house of

fiction" (1961:9).⁵ This does not mean, however, that the recourse to rhetorical devices guarantees or is synonymous to a literary use of language. My point is that the latter not only overtly acknowledges the inevitable figurality of language, but moreover seeks to explore its multifarious possibilities in its signifying process.

The notion of the paternal function in psychoanalysis, particularly in its Lacanian inflexion, partakes of this literary awareness. The "Name-of-the-Father" is used synonymously in Lacan's writings and seminars as the "paternal metaphor" and, *qua* metaphor, is particularly resistant to a semantic, word-to-word translation. Hence I devote Part I of this dissertation to an introduction to the linguistic context of its elaboration, as well as to some of the possible semantic/conceptual ranges such a notion carries.

Furthermore, the paternal metaphor is the topos⁶ on and around which I explore some facets of the complex relationship between literature and psychoanalysis.⁷ It

⁵ It should be stressed that I am not aiming at providing a general definition (or conceptualisation) of the literary phenomenon, since I do not believe, with Eagleton (1991), that there is a literary immutable essence which would ground such a definition.

⁶ I use topos in both senses it has in Greek, i.e., as a common topic and as a place.

⁷ It is not superfluous to affirm that my exploration does not aim at being exhaustive nor comprehensive. Besides the fact that I do not subscribe to such an aim, there have been, since Freud, many and more foreboding attempts in this direction. More recently, Shoshana Felman's work (e.g. 1982 and 1987) is in my view one of the most remarkable instances of this exploratory endeavour.

defines the route along which my translation moves. In this respect, Lacan's texts occupy a more prominent position than any other psychoanalytic author, insofar as, I would claim, the Name-of-the-Father is his re-conceptualisation of Freud's mythical elaboration of the father figure in particular, and of the Oedipus complex in general. As the former points out in "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire", *"l'Oedipe... ne saurait tenir indéfiniment l'affiche dans les formes de société où se perd de plus en plus le sens de la tragédie"* (1966:813; 1977:310).

Besides corroborating my claim that the paternal metaphor is a re-elaboration of the fundamental Freudian notion of the Oedipus complex, Lacan's quote is important insofar as it abounds in implicit and explicit references to the theatre, and specifically to Greek tragedy.⁸ In my analysis, the last two subspecies of the literary language constitute the privileged members of the dialogue between literature and psychoanalysis that I set out in this dissertation, and in which I interfere as an interpreter or translator. After Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" (1969), I understand this activity as encompassing more than the con-formation of one (foreign) language into another, familiar one. Instead, my attempt in

⁸ As it will be seen in the subsequent chapters, the approximation of the theatrical to psychoanalysis has been promoted ever since Freud.

putting them side by side, in comparing them, is guided by the overall purpose of constructing a dual carriageway which brings, on the one hand, psychoanalysis into Greek tragedy and, on the other, evinces the mythic-tragic elements of psychoanalytical language. It is *in summa*, a metaphoric contamination in which each of these discourses has to be expanded, by means of the loss of some of its "purity" or "properties", in order to accommodate the other and, ultimately, to enable an understanding of one another. The anthropologist Rita Segato has given a more fortuitous name for this comparative procedure: "reciprocal exegesis", which she defines in terms of a hermeneutic recourse we make use of whenever confronted by the "opacity of another culture" (or language, in our case; 1995:37).

Besides the paternal metaphor, my reciprocal exegesis of literature and psychoanalysis has another fundamental topos, namely Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. It is on this site that the tragic and psychoanalytical languages will be compared. My expectation is that the latter will help descry some of the polysemic (and polemic) intricacies of the former, and that the opacity of Lacanian psychoanalysis will be illuminated by the tragic idiom, especially by the notorious difficulties of its Aeschylean inflexion.

As I have intimated above, this dialogic situation is not exclusively circumscribed to the two parties in question. Since it is a translation exercise, my presence as

its agent deserves some demarcations. First of all, my role as translator/ interpreter seeks to bridge the gap between two different languages, and thus entails the establishment of some sort of continuity between the two discourses in question. The construction of such continuity ultimately rests on the identification (or construction) of contiguous links between the parties to be approximated or compared. Contiguity signposts the presence of another key rhetorical figure -- besides metaphor -- in the structure of my whole dissertation, i.e., metonymy. This means that the interplay of differences, or the articulation of these two different languages, rests on the constitution of a contiguous basis. In this respect, the "bottle" that contains my letter is structured in a manner analogous to Roman Jakobson's bi-axial model of language as comprising the metaphorical pole (based on paradigmatic selection), and the metonymic one (based on syntagmatic combination) (1971:72-96). Rather than entertaining an oppositional relation, these poles are structured in a pulsatory form. It is in the articulation (in both sense of the word) of these axes that this work is grounded. This structure, *per necessitatem*, informs the very nature of my "letter", which also moves along, or pulsates between the metaphorical and the metonymical poles. The former is explicitly present in the comparative analysis of the construction of the Name-of-the-Father by the tragic and

the psychoanalytical discourses.⁹

The metonymic axis is less conspicuous, and concerns primarily my interpretative endeavour. According to Vincent Crapanzano (1992:2-4), the interpreter -- who has in the god Hermes its most well-known figuration -- is far from being a neutral deliverer of messages. His activity of taking a piece of information (or knowledge) from a sender who knows to a receiver who does not is not as straightforward and expedite a process as some depictions of the god (with wings at his heels) would have us believe. Besides moving in between the desires of sender and receiver, the messenger/interpreter is also propelled by his own desire. That is, in the establishment of a contiguous link between two parties, the interpreter's desire plays an important role. As Crapanzano points out, "he is a messenger seeking a message" (1992:3), to which I would add that the act of seeking takes precedence over the object sought.

The analogy with Hermes helps clarify the position from which I speak. Hermes, at least in principle, is not at the service of either sender or receiver of the message. Likewise, I would not posit this dissertation as belonging either to the realm of psychoanalysis or to classical studies (I am neither a psychoanalyst nor a classicist, nor do I expect my readers to be so). Rather it finds its most

⁹ It will become clear in the subsequent chapters that the thematic presence of the metaphoric axis in actual fact rests on a metonymical basis.

appropriate and legitimate place in the field of comparative literature, which, in my view, is not demarcated solely by the study of different national literatures, but by a comparative approach, by a relational perspective that should ensue a "reciprocal exegesis" of the issues in question. It should be noted, however, especially after psychoanalysis, that reciprocity is neither a given, nor a constant in relationships of any kind. In this sense, the relationship I establish in the subsequent pages between the psychoanalytical and the tragic discourses oscillates between the prevalence of one discourse over the other, and, at certain moments, it reaches a more desirable, but tenuous, balance.

Such fluctuating movement ultimately interrogates clear-cut divisions between the theoretical and the fictional. Even though I do not subscribe to the idea that disciplinary boundaries can be unproblematically effaced, I would argue that, in the case of these discursive formations, a prioristic distinctions, occasionally carried out in antagonistic terms, are hardly tenable either. My discussion of the notion of the "father", especially as focussed on the overtly metaphorical dimension awarded to it by the theoretical discourse of psychoanalysis, will put into question the grounds and limits of this opposition in the course of the subsequent chapters. *In summa*, I claim that the differences between the two discourses should be

regarded in textual terms, rather than being either made oblivious under the aegis of a comparative study, or upheld in the name of disputable oppositions.

PART I - THE PATERNAL METAPHOR IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

Introduction

This first part aims at presenting a general introduction not only to the notion of the paternal metaphor in psychoanalysis, but also to situate such notion within the grammatical parameters of psychoanalytical language. This procedure is motivated by the disciplinary insertion of this dissertation in the field of comparative literature, and not of psychoanalysis. This means that it is written on the assumption that my readers have a substantial knowledge of the literary topos on which the comparative analysis will take place -- i.e., Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, and of some of its critical tradition -- but not of psychoanalytic theory.

I claimed in the Introduction that the paternal function, as put forth by psychoanalytical theory, is in fact anticipated by certain literary texts. In this respect, my choice to begin this translation enterprise with the psychoanalytic elaboration can be regarded as an indication that I do not intend to produce a genealogical study of the paternal metaphor, that my major concern is not about tracing a paternal line of descent from Aeschylus to Lacan. Even though comparative studies ultimately rely on the existence of certain similarities between the things compared, there are disciplinary and discursive differences

between psychoanalysis and Greek tragedy that cannot be effaced. What follows aims at showing some of the specificities of the former, the logic of its articulation and the basis of its foundation.

CHAPTER I - "THE REVENGING GODS
'GAINST PARRICIDES DID ALL THE THUNDER BEND":
THE FATHER (IN) FREUD

These things have never happened,
but they have always existed.

Timberlake Wertenbaker
(*The Love of the Nightingale*)

(The) Setting (of) the father

In his 1964 seminar, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan conducts an analysis of what constitutes, in his view, the founding concepts of the theoretico-clinical edifice built by Freud, namely, "the unconscious, repetition, the transference and the drive" (1981b:12).¹ These terms are spelt out in a paragraph immediately following a resentful reference to a seminar he had intended to give, but abandoned due to the suspension, by the *Société Française de Psychanalyse*, of his rights to

¹ Lacan's use of language is notoriously complex and thus makes its translation at times impossible. In face of this difficulty, and of the problematic or scarce nature of the English translations of Lacan's work, I have adopted the principle of quoting him in the original. Citations in English, such as this one, occur only in less complex cases or when the differences with the original are not disputable.

act as a recognised training analyst.² Such a seminar would be devoted to the "Names-of-the-Father" as a means to "discover by what privilege Freud's desire was able to find entrance into the field of experience he designates as the unconscious" (1981b:12). Lacan's text is revealing: "the father" is not, strictly speaking, a fundamental concept in psychoanalysis, but appears as supporting its very foundation, that is to say, it is an instrument, a dynamic term that enables the construction of the conceptual landmarks of this discourse.³ I would contend that this supporting role is made possible by the theoretical status the father gains in Freud as a *figure*, and more specifically, as a metaphor.⁴ It is this metaphorical

² For a detailed account and discussion of the polemic relationship between Lacan and the psychoanalytic institution, Elisabeth Roudinesco's *Jacques Lacan & Co.: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925-1985* (1990) constitutes to my knowledge the most thorough and important reference.

³ Albeit not a "fundamental concept", the importance of the father in psychoanalytic theory has been increasingly acknowledged in recent years, as attested by numerous seminars and publications devoted to this notion. I would single out an interdisciplinary conference held in Paris in May 1987, under the title of "Rencontres avec la psychanalyse: les fonctions du père", out of which came a massive collection of essays -- *Le Père: Métaphore paternelle et fonction du père: l'Interdit, la Filiation, la Transmission* (Augé et al., 1989) -- which discusses the father from the point of view of anthropology, sociology, history, and literary criticism, besides psychoanalysis. Within the latter's disciplinary boundaries, the French journal *Che vuoi?* dedicated an entire issue to the question of the father in Freud, entitled "Actualité de Totem and Tabou" (*Che vuoi?*, 1995).

⁴ I should emphatically anticipate, though, that Freud's "father" is not consistently treated as a metaphor. As will be shown in the course of this presentation, he himself admits some of his literal renderings (readings) of the father.

nature that makes the psychoanalytic father a function, i.e., an operation through which an object yields another object, as logic holds.⁵

I understand, with Gérard Genette, that a figure is what conforms the void existing between signifier and signified, or as he claims, a "relation that links signifier and signified" (1982:32). As the mark of a discontinuity which informs language and its usage, the figure functions in a paradoxical manner: at the same time that it is a reminder of the void separating signifier and signified, it is also an attempt to cross over the bar, to fill up this void by giving it a form.⁶ In this respect, the figure can be situated at the limits of language, where it performs a pulsatory movement between what is possible and impossible to be said, between the representable and the unrepresentable.

Figure as an attempt to capture the unsayable, or to give form to what remains un-formed and thus outside symbolisation, is acknowledged since the early stages of

⁵ I derive the notion of function from mathematical logic. According to Gottlob Frege, a function is defined by its "unsaturatedness", i.e., that which needs completion. For example, the expression (or statement) $y = x^2 - 4x$ should be read as a function that yields a parabola (Geach and Black, 1980:26). This notion also holds true for linguistic cases. The statement "the capital of France", for example, is a function that yields "Paris".

⁶ Genette's understanding of figure echoes Shakespeare's definition of poetic language in general: "...the poet's pen/Turns [things unknown] to shapes and gives to airy nothing/A local habitation and a name" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, V,i,15-17).

rhetoric. As Quintilian observes in the *Instituto Oratoria*, a figure "is the term employed when we give our language a conformation [*conformatio*] other than the obvious or the ordinary" (IX. I. 3-5; p.351).⁷ This definition is a reiteration of a commonly held notion in rhetoric whereby metaphor is the figure of all figures (e.g., Genette, 1982:114), the figure which defines all figurative language. In effect, Quintilian's figure resonates and expounds Aristotle's succinct definition of metaphor given in the *Poetics*: "metaphor is the application of an alien name by transference" (1457b 7-9; p.77).⁸

The father in Freud can be understood in the terms set down by classical rhetoric and made explicit by Genette's understanding of figure. Qua metaphor, its constitution is not only multifarious but also dispersed along the Freudian canon.⁹ From his early speculations on hysteria¹⁰ to his

⁷ Quintilian points out that his *figura* is equivalent to the Aristotelian *schēma* (*Instituto Oratoria*, IX, I, 2; p.349), i.e., the form or character of something. *Schēma* also implies a notion of seizure, which can be found in the verb *echō*, of which it is derived, meaning "to have" or "to hold", among others.

All references to Quintilian are taken from the Loeb Classical Library edition, English translation by H.E. Butler (1979). In the case of bilingual editions of Greek and Latin texts, such as this, the reference to the classical text is given after each quote, followed by the page number of the English translation.

⁸ Unless otherwise stated, all references to the *Poetics* are taken from *The "Poetics" of Aristotle*. Critical edition and translation by S.H. Butcher (1911).

⁹ The much used (and abused) volume XXIV of the Standard Edition lists approximately sixty-two thematic *dédouplements* of the "father".

later writings, such as *Moses and Monotheism* (1939a), "the father" not only is a constant reference, but evolves from the father figure to the father as figure. This linguistic and conceptual "turn"¹¹ from the progenitor to the metaphor finds in *Totem and Taboo* (1913) its most emblematic instance.

The four essays which compose this book were first published separately, between 1912 and 1913, in the psychoanalytic journal *Imago*, under the general title of "Some Points of Agreement between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics", and, in 1913, were published together in book form as *Totem and Taboo*. In its preface, Freud openly states that the book "represent[s] a first attempt... at applying the point of view and the findings of psycho-analysis to some unsolved problems of social psychology" (1913:xiii).¹² Freud's conjunction of

¹⁰ In a letter to Fliess, for example, of January 24, 1897 (letter 58), Freud declares: "in hysterical patients I recognize their father behind their high standards of love, their humility towards their lover or their being unable to marry because their ideals are unfulfilled" (1950:244). Unless otherwise stated, all references to Freud's works are taken from the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (S.E.). Translated by James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud. The year of publication given in brackets after each quote follows the chronology established by the editors of the Standard Edition.

¹¹ This linguistic "twist" or "turn", which is at the basis of all figurative language, is one of the meanings of the Greek *trópos*, which is also the etymon of trope.

¹² Within the psychoanalytic debate in vogue at the time, this book also represents Freud's "correction" of Jung's postulations that "social psychology" (the latter's "archetypes") can be used to explain individual psychology. Contrary to Jung, Freud attempts to

psychoanalysis and the social sciences has not been a smooth one. The objections made to his interdisciplinary enterprise refer both to conceptual and methodological problems. Lévi-Strauss, for example, argues in *Totemism* that

contrary to what Freud maintained, social constraints, whether positive or negative, cannot be explained, either in their origin or in their persistence, as the effects of impulses or emotions which appear again and again, with the same characteristics during the course of centuries and millennia, in different individuals.
(1991:69)

Lévi-Strauss seems to object to the very foundation of psychoanalysis, that is, the privileging of psychic processes, which are reduced in this critique to "impulses or emotions". An objection more directly oriented to methodological problems is voiced by Lacan, Freud's most zealous reader, who cannot leave unnoticed "the mythical circularity that vitiates" *Totem and Taboo* (1977:23). This circularity is also noticed by literary criticism as, for example, Mieke Bal's critique of Freud's "*myth en abyme*" (1987:68), i.e., of his construction of a myth to account for the myth of origins.

A somewhat apologetic reply, *avant la lettre*, can be read in "The Question of Lay Analysis", where Freud claims that "it seems to me unnecessary for me to appeal here to the 'as if' which has become so popular. The value of a 'fiction' of this kind... depends on how much one can

expose in *Totem and Taboo* that it is sexuality which informs mythology, and not the other way round (Mezan, 1990:265).

achieve with its help" (1926e:194). Besides intimating at psychoanalysis's status as a "theoretical fiction",¹³ these lines sketch out a key methodological principle of the psychoanalytic discourse which is put in relief in *Totem and Taboo*. Not only does it make use of concepts and objects of other fields of knowledge, but moreover, treats them in a radically metaphorical manner, insofar as it writes its own theoretical constructions underneath these concepts.¹⁴ I would argue that ethnology, and in particular the much questionable notion of totemism as developed in *Totem and Taboo*, are to be seen as palimpsests in which we can read a broader process of enquiry into the general laws which govern the constitution of the social bonds that found the psyche.¹⁵ Freud's undocumented (and hence "false") ethnological evidences concerning totemism inscribe his data

¹³ This expression is used by Freud in one of the theoretical landmarks of psychoanalysis, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a:603), and seems to have inspired two studies concerned with the fictional nature of the psychoanalytical enterprise: Maud Mannoni's *La théorie comme fiction: Freud, Groddeck, Winnicott, Lacan* (1979), and Malcolm Bowie's *Freud, Proust and Lacan: Theory as Fiction* (1988).

¹⁴ We should have in mind, particularly after deconstruction, that "it is difficult to find concepts that are not metaphorical", as Jonathan Culler points out (1982:147). However, the overtly metaphorical nature of psychoanalytic concepts is what is relevant in this case.

¹⁵ Freud's instrumentalism is not circumscribed to ethnology. In his polemic *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood* (1910c), for example, we find an analogous case. Leonardo becomes "Leonardo", a means through which Freud can probe into the nature of the psychoanalytic method and further develop certain concepts, such as those of narcissism and the Oedipal configuration.

in a different discursive order from the one that characterises anthropology. They are "as ifs" data, i.e., a fictionalization of material reality carried out in order to identify the foundations of what gives form and meaning to "the human".

This pursuit situates the psychoanalytic discourse in a limit situation analogous to the one which grounds the notion of figure. Like the latter, psychoanalysis pulsates between what can be symbolised (or said) and what escapes representation. Since the unrepresentable can only be expressed by figurative means, as implicit in the Aristotelian *schēma*, psychoanalysis cannot but make recourse to figurative language (and constitute itself as such). As Michel Foucault signposts in *The Order of Things*, "psychoanalysis advances and leaps over representation, overflows it on the side of finitude, and thus reveals...this region where representation remains in suspense, on the edge of itself..." (1973:374).

The above mentioned problems concerning *Totem and Taboo* have to be examined in the light of this discursive feature. Lévi-Strauss's critique that "totemism is like hysteria" (1991:1),¹⁶ that is, a construction which tells us more

¹⁶ The connection between the totemism *qua* fiction, and hysteria, is made explicit by Freud himself. In the draft of a letter to Fliess, dated May 31, 1897 (letter 64, draft N), he points out that "the mechanism of creative writing is the same as that of hysterical phantasies", and corroborates the link between fiction and neurotic disturbances by concluding that "Shakespeare was right in his juxtaposition of poetry and...fine frenzy"

about the researcher's mind than about the people studied asks for this kind of re-focussing. Indeed, totemism in Freud is a fictionalisation that reveals not a remote culture and its norms, but the psychoanalytic version of these norms. It makes use of the former in order to think the latter, an approach Lévi-Strauss himself deems legitimate and characteristic of the comparative method of investigation (e.g., 1963:218).¹⁷ Moreover, the "mind" which constitutes the psychoanalytical object is also inscribed in the order of the figurative.

In the case of *Totem and Taboo*, "taboo" is the actual object of investigation due to the fact that "...taboos still exist among us", whereas the totemic system does not, as Freud points out in the preface (1913:xiv). This tangibility of the present, however, should not be taken in purely positivistic terms: "[taboos] do not differ in their psychological nature from Kant's 'categorical imperative', which operates in a compulsive fashion and rejects any conscious motives" (1913:xiv). Freud opts for an "alien name" (*Poetics* 1457b 8; p.77), the Polynesian "taboo", to

(1950:256).

¹⁷ The risk of comparative studies, particularly interdisciplinary ones, having a wishy-washy outcome is something Freud himself was aware of. He writes in the opening paragraph of the third essay: "Writings that seek to apply the findings of psycho-analysis to topics in the field of mental sciences have the inevitable defect of offering too little to readers of both classes" (1913:75).

shed new light onto the already described phenomena of social interdictions, regarded in terms of the Kantian categorical imperative. The distinctive mark of Freud's treatment of taboos is precisely the inclusion in the field of analysis of what Lévi-Strauss objects to above, i.e., "impulses and emotions" (1991:69), which are grounded on the domain of the *unconscious*. As Freud states,

we should have to suppose that the desire to murder is actually present in the unconscious and that neither taboos nor moral prohibitions are psychologically superfluous but that on the contrary they are explained and justified by the existence of an ambivalent attitude towards the impulse to murder. (1913:70)

Being of the order of the unrepresentable, the unconscious, this "unthinkable notion", as Lacan puts it (1966:182), can only be spoken of figuratively.

The figurative quality provides, in my view, the justification for the presence of both "totem" and "taboo" in the title of the book, in spite of the latter being its proper concern (1913:xiv). Totem and taboo are "alien names", instruments to articulate (in both senses) past and present, the representable and the unrepresentable. In the Freudian idiom this pair can be described as *constructions* which aim at revealing a *historical truth*,¹⁸ the term Freud

¹⁸ The notion of historical truth is articulated in Freud in opposition to that of "material truth" (1939a:129), which would refer to historical facts. A discussion of the different notions of history, or what some critics prefer to see in terms of the conflict between "universalism and historicity" (e.g., Bal, 1987:66), is beyond the scope of the present introduction. One of the best treatments of the question of universalism and a-

uses to designate the irruption in the present of past psychic material that has been hitherto repressed (1939a:127-132).¹⁹ The procedure of devising "conjectures" in order to help bring about repressed residues of the analysand's psychic history finds a synthetic expression in a line from Polonius that Freud quotes in "Construction in Analysis": "our bait of falsehood had taken a carp of truth" (1937d:262).²⁰ In the reference to Shakespeare we can identify a trait common to both literary and psychoanalytic discourses: the privileging of the figurative (Polonius's "falsehood"), over the literal, of the symbolic over the

historicism in psychoanalysis can be found in Jean-Claude Milner's *L'Oeuvre Claire: Lacan, la science, philosophie* (1995). I cannot leave unnoticed here the resonances of the Aristotelian discussion of the differences between history and poetry carried out in the *Poetics* (1451b 1-32; pp. 35-37).

¹⁹ The notion of construction receives a detailed elaboration in "Constructions in Analysis", and can be succinctly understood as pieces of interpretation (or even short fictions) put forth by the analyst so as to allow for the emergence of repressed contents: "the path that starts from the analyst's construction ought to end in the patient's recollection", observes Freud (1937d:265). This recollection of repressed material -- the historical truth -- is a notion more sparsely elaborated. It can be understood as a special case of the return of the repressed, such as found in the section devoted to this topic in *Moses and Monotheism*, where Freud argues that "in so far as [an idea] brings a return of the past, it must be called truth" (1939a:130). He carefully disentangles the notion of historical truth from that of "material truth", a reminder that the understanding the social sciences have of reality and history is not necessarily synonymous with that of psychoanalysis.

²⁰ Shakespeare's lines read: "Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;/ And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,/ With windlasses an with assays of bias,/ By indirections find directions out (*Hamlet*, II,i,63-66). The last line is yet another concise description of the psychoanalytic method: through the analyst's constructions ("indirections"), the analysand encounters her/his historical truth (the "directions" of the treatment).

material.

Totem and Taboo, while thematically announcing itself as the conjunction of psychoanalysis and "social psychology", textually promotes the convergence of literature and psychoanalysis around the metaphorical. The totemic father is its "bait of falsehood" with which it reveals an implicit structure, namely the primordial law which founds psychic life, and hence the unconscious. This is what constitutes for psychoanalysis "a carp of truth", i.e., a truth that comes about in and through the domain of language.²¹ In this sense, a closer look at Freud's textual construction of the father *qua* metaphor is in order.

Freud's metaphorical imperative

It is not uncommon to find theatrical metaphors in discussions of *Totem and Taboo*: "act", "staging", "spectacle", "scene" are frequent notions transposed to critical studies of this text. Claude Raband's "Entre père

²¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates the ambiguity surrounding the word "carp". Besides referring to a kind of fish used for food, in sixteenth-century English it also connoted "talk". The editor of the Arden edition of *Hamlet*, Harold Jenkins, calls attention to the pun Shakespeare is making between fish and talking, i.e., between "being caught" in the act of speaking. For psychoanalysis, it is only in language that the unconscious is constituted and, hence, can be "caught". This is why puns and slips of the tongue such as this constitute a privileged instance for the analytic observation, as Freud demonstrates in *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905c).

et totem: l'acte" (1995) is one of these instances.²² Such uses, as metaphorology tells us (e.g. Eco, 1986) are not unmotivated. Theatrical metaphors are indeed appropriate in appraisals of a work which ultimately addresses the constitution of the law and, *ipso facto*, has to take conflict into account -- the backbone of dramatic structure. In effect, *Totem and Taboo* in its entirety can be regarded as a dramatic text, which follows, rather feebly, the conventions of dramatic composition in vogue at the time. The three-act structure so extensively practised by realist playwrights, such as Ibsen, can be applied to this text. Act I -- the *exposé* -- could be composed by the first three essays; Act II -- the climax -- can be found in the fourth essay, the longest of them all, which also contains Act III -- the *dénouement*. This schematic division puts in relief the unbalanced textual distribution of *Totem and Taboo*. The introduction to the "actual drama" of the fourth essay takes up two thirds of the whole text. Such disproportional treatment can be seen as proportional to the "uncanny" quality of what is to follow. In other words, Freud's long and detailed account of totemism seeks to find an "objective correlative" for the emergence, in the following essay/acts, of the figure of the primordial

²² I should note that my own heading of the previous section also makes use of a theatrical metaphor; "setting" is used there both in its theatrical sense and as an introductory movement of putting something in motion.

father. In stylistic terms, this dense preparation for the staging of the drama lays realistic grounds for the enactment of an utterly fantastic piece. This discrepancy in style can be situated within the framework of discursive levels: from the so-claimed scientific discourse on totemism (the first three essays) the text moves into the overtly fictional depiction of the totemic father, his murder, and the subsequent institution of the symbolic law (fourth essay).²³

In face of these textual features it is not surprising to find dramatic metaphors to describe Freud's fiction. Among them "scene" is the one most commonly deployed. After his own usage (e.g., "the scene of the father"; 1913:150), this metaphor has been so widely employed to the point of acquiring the synecdochic value of standing for a summary of the whole text. Such a general use can be read metaphorically. From an intrinsically textual point of view, the "scene of the primordial father" refers to an event that takes place prior to the constitution of the symbolic law, that is, it rests on a conflict constructed in such terms so that the law not only is a desirable solution but, moreover, a "categorical imperative". As Freud remarks, out of this conflict come "the two fundamental taboos of totemism

²³ The passage from the ethnological to the fictional order is not an abrupt one. Freud carefully paves the way by introducing chiefly psychoanalytic concepts such as the drives and their insertion in social, besides individual, practices and customs.

[parricide and incest], which... correspond to the two repressed wishes of the Oedipus complex" (1913:143). On the level of psychoanalytic theory, this is also a "primordial scene", in that it provides the grounds for the elaboration of the notion of the Law, besides corroborating others, such as the Oedipal structure, desire, and the unconscious. In this respect, the "scene" of the primordial father and his killing plays a structural role in psychoanalytic theory which is maintained until *Moses and Monotheism* (1939a:132), where the pre-historical event is substituted by the "historically" attested advent of monotheism.

It is a basic tenet of dramatic theory that all scenes presuppose the existence of *characters*.²⁴ Romance languages use a name for this function whose etymology is revealing. *Personagem* (Portuguese), *personaggio* (Italian), *personagen* (Spanish), and *personnage* (French) come from the Latin *persona*, i.e., a mask. The use made of this theatrical device, particularly in Greek theatre, enables us to see the mask as mediating different levels of representation: from the material world of the actor to the symbolic one of the character, or from the human to the heroic or divine orders. In this mediating function we can read semiotic imprints²⁵

²⁴ It is evident that this principle is not exclusive to the dramatic genre, but holds true to narrative forms in general, which require the existence of "events" (which comprise scenes) and characters (Bal, 1985).

²⁵ The Greek equivalent of "imprint" is *charactēr*, from which the English "character" is derived.

of the theatrical mask. In a lucid essay on the Greek mask, Jean-Pierre Vernant and F. Frontisi-Ducroux observe that "in seeing Agamemnon, Heracles or Oedipus represented by their masks, the spectators know that they are gone forever..." (in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 1991:44). In other words, the mask performs an articulation of past and present, of presence and absence which is analogous to that of the rhetorical figure. As Pascal observed, "figure bears presence and absence" (in Genette, 1982:48). This conflation of what is and is not, of the real and the virtual is an attribute shared by both the figure and the theatrical character. Freud's "primordial father" is inscribed in this conjunction of character and figure and, furthermore, enhances a special character of the rhetorical figure: the metaphor.

Aristotle defines metaphor as "the application of an alien name by transference..." (*Poetics*, 1457b 7-9; p.77), and then proceeds to describe, succinctly, how metaphors are constructed. Aristotle's definition provides a fruitful grid with which to read the paternal metaphor in Freud. An important aspect of metaphor is immediately perceptible in the Greek text: *metaphorá* is an *epiphorá*, i.e. an addition or, in its common economic acceptance, an increase.²⁶

²⁶ Butcher's translation of *epiphorá* as "application" calls attention to one of the semantic domains to which this polysemic noun belongs in Greek. In addition to this sense, I would also underline the notion of addition, based on lexical grounds (Liddell and Scott, 1994), as well as on the very formation of the verb *epi-*

This rhetorical process of production of surplus value²⁷ is clarified by the object of the transferential addition: "an alien name".

Paraphrasing Juliet, we can ask at first "what is a name?" Aristotle's is a straightforward answer: "names signify something" ("*tà dè onómata sēmaínei ti*") (*Rhetoric*, 1410b 10).²⁸ Anticipating Austin, Aristotle's definition hints at the impossibility of ascribing meaning to a "name" independently of the context of its utterance. "What alone has meaning is a sentence", Austin argues (1979:56). In this

phérō, i.e. to bring upon. I have problems with the alternatives followed by more recent translators, like G.M.A. Grube (1958:44-5) and Stephen Halliwell (1987:55), who efface *epiphorá* under the notion of transfer. Also intriguing is Alan Bass's remark in his translation of Jacques Derrida's "White Mythology". He insists on the importance of "Derrida's citation of Greek terms", but his attempt to support this importance backfires: "the French translation of *epiphorá* as 'transport' [sic] preserves a 'metaphoric play on words...'" (1982:231). The metaphoric play on words is to be found in the very notion of *metaphorá*.

²⁷ This economic metaphor constitutes an important current in the theory of metaphor, whose discussion would be beyond the scope of the present introduction. For a detailed analysis of the problem, Derrida's "White Mythology" (1982) is in my view the most thorough and vertical one. Much more timid is Umberto Eco's discussion, under the notion of "the transfer of attributes" (1986:92-4).

²⁸ References to the *Rhetoric* are from the Loeb Classical Library edition, English translation by John Henry Freese (1947). Freese problematically opts for translating *onómata* as "words" and not names. Médéric Dufour and André Wartelle -- two other translators and commentators of the *Rhetoric* -- equally choose "*mot*" as the French for *onómata* (1973:63, vol.3). It would suffice to recall J.L. Austin's remark that this is a case of "the curious belief that all words are names" (1979:61) to make evident the problematic character of these translations. A more appropriate option is made by Edward Meredith Cope, who gives both "names" and "nouns" as alternatives for *onómata* (1877:108, vol.3).

sense, the pursuit of what a name is is doomed to failure insofar as, *qua* name, it can only come about in the process of signification, i.e. in the relation between signifier and signified.

This general relation has to be specified in the case of the metaphorical name. Still with Juliet, the second question we can pose is "what is in a name" that makes it metaphorical? Or in the case of the "father", what sort of relationship takes place between the signifier and the signified that allows us to describe it as metaphorical? Again, a closer look at Aristotle's Greek is revealing: "*onómatos allotríou*"²⁹ ("an alien name", *Poetics*, 1457b 4) would be the concise answer. This conciseness, however, is expanded within the very context of its utterance. In the same paragraph *allótrios* stands in direct opposition to the adjective *kýrios* (used four times in seven lines of 1457b), which besides "authority", also encompasses the ideas of something ordained, legitimate, proper, regular, as in the Latin *proprius* (Liddell and Scott, 1994). Such usage evinces a type of logic (logos) that Aristotle spells out in the *Rhetoric*: "it is when placed in juxtaposition that contraries are most evident" (1405a; p.355). That is to say that the definition of names (not to mention entities and concepts) rests on the constitution of an-other in oppositional terms to the same as a means of endowing the

²⁹ *Allótrios* comes from *állos*, i.e. an-other.

latter with substance.

This logic informs Liddell and Scott's definition of *allótrios* given in their *Greek-English Lexicon*.³⁰ They identify two major meanings in this adjective: a) as opposed to *ídios*, it can mean "of or belonging to another", the equivalent of the Latin *alienus*; b) as opposed to *oikeîos*, it means foreign, strange, as the Latin *peregrinus*. In this respect, their lexicographic definition can be seen as doing more than "explain[ing] the meaning of the name" (Eco, 1986:58). It highlights the Aristotelian *logos* enunciated above.

This "juxtaposition of contraries" provides a useful starting point for the analysis of the constitution of the paternal metaphor in Freud. The common denominator in the relation between the metaphorised (*allótrios*) name and its "source" is alterity: *oikeîos*, *ídios*, and *kýrios* are others to *allótrios* and thus help to define the latter. I would argue that this relation is analogous to the one in which the psychoanalytic father, *qua* metaphor, is enveloped. The basis for this operation is provided by the adjective *oikeîos*, i.e. that which belongs to the household, to home, to family relations, a *res familiaris*. In this acceptation, the Greek covers two primary aspects of the father: a biological entity -- the progenitor -- and a social, or

³⁰ It is relevant to point out that "lexicon" comes from *lexis*, i.e., a speech, a sentence, or a word, which in its turn derives from the verb *légō*, the etymon of *lógos*.

kinship relation.

In metaphorology, these would constitute the "proper" signifieds of the "father". The question that poses itself, then, concerns the type of connection that is established between this sign and the *allótrios* dimension added to it by the metaphoric process. Aristotle's quote from the *Rhetoric* hints at this connection. The "juxtaposition of contraries" entails that it is only through difference that identities can emerge. Thus, the father of the domain of the *allótrios*, of the strange and the alien, becomes the other of the *oikeîos* father.

The Aristotelian opposition, however, should be refined from its Manichean undertones. As psychoanalysis argues, the other might contain rejected or repressed residues of the same. In other words, the *allótrios* is not related to the *oikeîos* in terms of a simple "juxtaposition of contraries". As the hidden face of the *oikeîos*, the *allótrios* father is part of the dialectics of the former's configuration. This relation reveals the paternal metaphor as a trope in the full etymological sense, insofar as it produces a linguistic "turn" (the Greek *trópos*), or reversal of meaning. In the constitution of the metaphor, the generative property of the familiar father is reversed into its opposite devouring aspect, i.e. the begetter becomes the killer. Freud's paternal metaphor literalises the most fundamental definition of this trope by promoting, in the space of the

signifier "father", the conflation of a familiar and an alien name.³¹

This conflation distinguishes one of the three basic features of the paternal metaphor in psychoanalysis, i.e. the insatiable obscene father, who animates, for example, Schreber's god (1911c).³² In *Totem and Taboo* this figure is initially characterised by means of Darwin's undocumented, and thus refutable, thesis of the "primal horde": "there is a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up" (1913:141). In the lack of ethnological evidence, the primal horde is transposed (metaphored) to the level of the "fantastic"³³, which provides the necessary "poetic freedom"³⁴ to present a father figure that is both the

³¹ "Conflation" is used here in an analogous sense to Freud's notion of "condensation", i.e., a process in which "a sole idea represents several associative chains at which point of intersection it is located" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988:82). I subscribe to the view that equates condensation to metaphor, such as held by Roman Jakobson, (1971), Tzvetan Todorov (1977), and Jean-Paul Martin (1976). This equation, though, is problematised by Jean-François Lyotard (1979), who identifies in the Freudian condensation distinct traits from those of metaphor.

³² Schreber -- the case of paranoia used by both Freud and Lacan -- describes how God has deceived him: "God himself had played the part of accomplice, if not instigator, in the plot whereby my soul was to be murdered and my body used like a strumpet" (1911c:19).

³³ This qualifier is used by Freud himself shortly before the introduction of his construction (1913:141).

³⁴ In "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming", Freud claims that creative writing is analogous to phantasising. In both cases the constraints of the "real world" (1908e:146) are unobserved by their authors in the attempt to fulfill their unsatisfied wishes.

begetter (*oikeîos*) and the devourer (*allótrios*) of his children.

The orality of the condensed father enhances his two most fundamental characteristics: a never-ending pursuit of enjoyment (*jouissance*)³⁵ and, consequently, the hindrance of the sons's enjoyment, which psychoanalysis calls *castration*. Such characteristics are, as Freud's adjective intimates, of the order of the fantastic. In the psychanalytic vocabulary, this order receives the name of "primal phantasy", defined by Laplanche and Pontalis as

typical phantasy structures (intra-uterine existence, primal scene, castration, seduction) which psycho-analysis reveals to be responsible for the organisation of phantasy life, regardless of the personal experiences of different subjects... (1988:331).

This definition indicates that primal phantasy is a structure that brings together psychic phenomena and the question of origins. Indeed, *Totem and Taboo* evolves around origins, around *archē*. Even though the first formulations of this question can be traced back to Oedipus's myth, it is not confined to mythical or literary discourses, but also includes the philosophical one, as Foucault points out

³⁵ Such a figure is not Freud's exclusive construction, but can be regarded as his actualisation of Cronus. As Greek mythology tells us, Cronus and his wife Rhea are a double of their parents -- Uranus/Ghea. Uranus inaugurates the all-enjoying father function, or the *père-jouissance* in Michel Silvestre's expression (1991:91), by entertaining permanent sexual intercourse with his wife. Cronus replicates this aspect in his never-ending devouring of his children.

(1973:341).³⁶ Freud's primordial father is the anchorage point of this "archeological" aim. At play here is the constitution of the symbolic law, the "order of orders" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:312) that inflects the human of being. To this effect Freud constructs the *allótrios* father, a phantasmatic figure which, thus, can only be represented in figurative terms. In this respect, the primordial father can be seen as having the theoretical status of a primal phantasy. A conceptual status Bal is right to problematise as "an attempt to impose, on notions that are alien to it, a family structure. Ideas, phantasies, get a father and become sons" (1987:66; emphasis in original).

This problematic exegetical procedure is acknowledged by Freud in an early letter to Fliess, already mentioned. In a passage of letter 64, of May 31, 1897, where Freud discusses one of his dreams, he admits that "the dream ... shows the fulfillment of my wish to catch a father as the originator of neurosis, and so to put an end to my doubts about this which still persist" (1950:254). Like Polonius's "bait of falsehood", this construction/interpretation catches "the carp of truth" of the metaphoric father: as a begetter, it gives birth to the "originator of neurosis", while also functioning as a fantastic and phantasmatic theoretical device to account for the origin of neurosis.

³⁶ In *The Order of Things*, he observes that the question posed by Kant of "*Was ist der Mensch?*" "runs through thought from early nineteenth-century (1973:341).

The *allótrios* father, then, is the father of a "father", Freud's figuration of the regulating principle that interdicts parricide and incest.³⁷ "...Avec *"Totem and Tabou"*...[Freud] ait voulu démontrer dans le crime primordial l'origine de la Loi universelle, argues Lacan (1966:130) .

The passage from the murder of the *allótrios* father to the constitution of the regulating "father" relies on another dimension of the paternal metaphor. The plot line which sustains this passage can be summarised as follows. The alien's father overwhelming sexual appetite does not allow any space for the sons' enjoyment of their father's women, that is to say, of the mother figure. In revolt, they are driven to murder him.³⁸ Nevertheless, the murdered father continues to haunt the sons, and returns from the dead, claiming for the punishment of "this most foul,

³⁷ In classical mythology the passage from one father-metaphor to the other would correspond to the *coup d'état* carried out by Zeus, who puts an end to Uranus/Cronus "empire of the senses".

³⁸ I should highlight the ambiguity that informs my use of the participle "driven". In addition to its common sense of being led to, Freud's notion of the drive (*Trieb*) is also implicit here. Distinct from the biological "instinct", notwithstanding the *imbroglio* generated in English by Strachey's translation, drives are psychic phenomena which, as such, encompass the biological and yet are not reducible to it. They are "forces which we assume to exist behind the tensions caused by the needs of the id", as Freud points out in *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis* (1940a:148). Two fundamental drives are in operation in the psychic apparatus: Eros, or libido, and the destructive or death drive (1940a:148-149).

strange and unnatural" murder.³⁹ The ghost's appearance is propelled by what psychoanalysis calls "guilt". However, if we give heed to Lévi-Strauss's remark that the origin of customs cannot be assigned to sentiments (1991:69-70), this causal relation has to be reversed in terms of the law propelling the emergence of guilt. Freud's theoretical way out of this chiasmic impasse was to introduce the notion of the love of the father. Under the threat of being penalised ("castrated" would be the psychoanalytic term) for their murderous deed, the sons gather together in worship of an idealised figuration of their late father, to which they bear uncompromising love. The reverence towards the father becomes a powerful link that ties the sons' attitudes towards one another and to themselves: around this ideal figure, they draw up a pact in order not to allow the repetition of the deceased's fate. Besides providing the basis for the sons's constitution as an *éthnos*, i.e., as a group of men living together, this ideal father also grounds the sons' own identity. This last aspect is the fictional expression of a tenet of psychoanalytic theory that identity is a matter of identification. As Lacan expounds, "*je suis semblable à celui qu'en reconnaissant comme homme, je fonde à me reconnaître*" (1966:118).

This "idealised" dimension of the metaphoric father is

³⁹ Freud's words echo Shakespeare's: "this memorable and criminal deed", writes the former (1913:142).

related to the first Greek adjective Liddell and Scott brought up as an opposite against which *allótrios* is defined: *ídios*. Generally applied to personal or private matters, or to one's own property, *ídios* qualifies the ideal father as pertaining to a secluded refuge, away from the ferocity of the alien father and the demands of the ghost. This restorative place acquires in Lacan the name of Imaginary. The ideal, pacifying father of the Imaginary is the sons' private property, whereas the *allótrios* belongs to another order that the sons wish to cast into oblivion, since it harbours the father's lustful greed, his murder, and the sons' unquenched desire for their father's woman. To this domain Lacan gives the name of the Real,⁴⁰ the realm of the impossible, of traumatic events such as parricide and incest, which took place in pre-historical times. In the words of contemporary British playwright, Timberlake Wertenbaker, the Real is the domain of "things [which] have never happened but [have] always existed".

From the lexicographic expansion of the Greek *allótrios* brought up above, the adjective *kýrios* remains pending. Present in the very con-text of Aristotle's definition of metaphor (*Poetics*, 1457b 1-5) in opposition to the "alien name", the adjective *kýrios* refers to the legitimate, the

⁴⁰ The conceptualisation of these orders is scattered and refractory in Lacan's work. Their most "systematic" (the quotation marks indicate that this attribute should be taken with caution when applied to Lacan's work) treatment can be found in the unpublished Seminar XXII (1974-75), the "R.S.I."

regular, the vernacular, to what is authorised to be said. This semantic field defines the third and ultimate dimension of the paternal metaphor in terms of a governing principle⁴¹ which, similarly to the ghost in *Hamlet*, proclaims the sons' deed an "unnatural" and "strange" (*allótrios*) act, and thus demands the punishment of its perpetrators. Against this unnaturalness the legislative father poses "nature", i.e. an ordered universe which is to preside over the sons' life as a collectivity. This universe receives, in Lacanian terminology, the name of the Symbolic.

An-other, "proper" name for this universe is *nomós*, a space constituted around a law. The "juxtaposition of contraries" -- unnatural/natural -- calls into question the opposition between nature and culture that has been maintained, since Aristotle, and which, Derrida claims, lies behind the very constitution of metaphor (1982:228). Under Shakespeare's light, the constitution of the *kýrios* father renders manifest that that which is evoked as nature is in actual fact culture. In this sense, "nature" is a metaphor, a transferential relation⁴² established in order to give

⁴¹ In addition to the acceptations given above, *kýrios*, as a noun, also refers to master, lord, to the one who has power or authority.

⁴² The metaphorical transfer is used here also in its psychoanalytic sense. For Freud, it is a process that takes place during the treatment -- and to a great extent characterises it -- through which the analyst becomes in the patient's eyes "the reincarnation of some important figure of [the analysand's] childhood or past" (1940a:174). By means of this reincarnation (another metaphor for metaphor), the transfer enables the emergence

vent to a regulating and regulated domain, the only "proper" (*kýrios*) domain. In this respect Lacan perspicaciously observes that "*en fin de compte, il n'y a que... le lien social*" (1975:51). Nature, like the *allótrios* father, lies outside history, and thus can only be captured figuratively.

Freud's "primal scene" is illustrative of the rhetorical role played by nature in the constitution of *nomós*. The alien father, like the "natural" domain to which he belongs, is a tropic recourse which makes possible the conceptualisation of the normative father, of culture. Between the two there is an unbridgeable gap, or discontinuity, that the figurative father is designed to suspend, but paradoxically ends up underlining the impossibility of the performance of such a task.

The *kýrios* attribute of the dead father reveals a second important dimension of the latter. As the principle that lays down the constitutive limits of the vernacular and the foreigner, of what is or is not legitimate to be said, the dead father's major domain is that of language, of the Lacanian Symbolic. Once more Shakespeare can be brought to clarify the status of the *kýrios* father: in the former, the ghost is part of the symbolic process of the play *qua* representation and furthermore, does not partake of the "material reality" of the other characters' dramatic

of repressed material with "plastic clarity", as Freud metaphorically asserts (1940a:176).

universe. As an immaterial reality, a presence which is an absence, Hamlet's ghost expresses the very *symbolic* nature of the dead father. His is the domain of language par excellence: "Mark me" is his sharp command to his son(s). "The scene of the father's vanquishment, of his greatest defeat, has become the stuff for the *representation* of his supreme triumph", writes Freud towards the end of *Totem and Taboo* (1913:150; emphasis added).

Freud's genesis of the symbolic law is constructed on the triadic configuration of the alien (*allótrios*), the ideal (*ídios*), and the normative (*kýrios*) fathers who become the leading characters/figures of a scene whose ultimate aim is to show the antecedents of the law, as a means to account for its existence. "In the beginning was the verb" ("*en archē ên ho lógos*"), discloses a previous and more popular account of this law. But contrary to his predecessors, Freud closes his attempt by echoing Goethe: "in the beginning was the Deed" (1913:161). Freud's claim that the deed founds the *lógos* contradicts not only St. John. Having such an arche-ological character, the deed cannot be represented through/in the *lógos*, but requires a meta-logos, a mythology. This attempt to explain the logos by what escapes it constitutes a logical impossibility that neither thought (*lógos*) nor language (*lógos*) can bear: "there is no metalanguage", as Lacan understood (1975:107). The latter's return to the paternal metaphor aims to extricate the "mythical

circularity" of *Totem and Taboo*, to show myth as a type of logos, and the function the myth plays in the structuring of language, as I would like to discuss in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II - "WHAT IS IN [LACAN'S] NAME?":

Littera pro verbis...
Ovid (*Metamorphosis*)

Lacan's ~~uni~~-verse

The question of the father in Lacan is a precipitate of Freud's notion: from the fluidity of the latter the former produces a condensed concept, namely that of the Name-of-the-Father. As the name of the "Name" suggests, this chemical process takes place in the domain of language.

Lacan calls one of his seminars, given in 1969-1970, "*L'envers de la psychanalyse*" (1991). "*Envers*" is a terse depiction of the Lacanian approach to Freud in general, and in particular to the question of the father. The Latin *versus* -- turned in the direction of, towards a thing⁴³ -- gives the fundamental root of the French *envers*, and also of Lacan's relation towards Freud, which he described as a

⁴³ The Latin adverb is derived from *verso*, which Lewis and Short's *Latin Dictionary* (1966) renders as to turn, to twist, to subvert, to examine, or to consider, among others. This polysemic verb, especially if taken with its correlate *verto*, can be taken as signposts of the Lacanian *envers* both in relation to Freud (as it will be seen below), as well as to the sub-version promoted by psychoanalysis in the discursive field of knowledge.

"return".⁴⁴ *Envers* further specifies this return. As a preposition, it reiterates the Latin sense of to/towards, as well as implying a support of or agreement with (the equivalent of the English "for", as opposed to "against"). Lacan not only promotes a turn in the theoretical and clinical ways (*versants*) of psychoanalysis, but moreover, directs this movement *towards* Freud and *in support of* his fundamental teachings. *Envers* also carries some qualitative aspects of this re-turn. As a noun, it refers to an aspect or side which is not commonly seen, e.g., the inside of an attire. The interplay of inside/outside also contains an oppositional sense of *envers*, as for example, in the expression "to read a book *à l'envers*" (Cf., Littré's *Dictionnaire de la langue française*), which characterises for Lacan the purport of psychoanalysis vis-à-vis other discourses, such as those of the sciences.

These lexicographic references are to be taken as signposts of Lacan's use of language, whose major (and perhaps sole) systematic characteristic is the awareness of the polysemic or ineffable quality of the linguistic signifier. As a professed Augustinian, Lacan shares with the former the attribute of a rhetorician, in whose hands language becomes what he conceives it to be: "the world of

⁴⁴ Stuart Schneiderman's title -- *Returning to Freud: Clinical Psychoanalysis in the School of Lacan* (1980) -- given to a collection of essays he edited is one, among many, illustrative case of the kind of approximating gesture carried out by Lacan and his followers vis-à-vis Freud.

words that creates the world of things" (1977:65), i.e., a structural principle (both as *principium* and as law). My approach to Lacan is in appreciation of his rhetorical turns, of his "verse". The fact that his language most often inhabits the poetical is yet another sign of its resistance to being appropriated by a monolithic critical discourse and effects a particular mode of reading whose outcome cannot be impermeable to the multiple resonances of his text. Lacan's text is delirious, a "*forme de délire*" (1966:167), which thus entails another form of *dé-lire*, of reading that has to listen to the dimension of *le dit*, of the signifier. In this respect, I do not aim at offering here a minimally comprehensive account of the Lacanian logos -- my (the) impossibility of performing such a task is indicated by the crossed "uni" in the title of this section. Rather I will give "Lacan" a literary treatment and examine some of his "verses", i.e., lines, sentences, paragraphs, *in summa*, discursive instances which support his articulation of the Name-of-the-Father.

My selection of these instances is also rooted in the "verse" (as inverse and verse), insofar as I privilege a text by Lacan -- "The Freudian Thing" -- which has not received the same critical attention, particularly from the part of literary criticism and philosophy, as other, "more dense" texts of the *Écrits*, such as "The Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'", "Kant avec Sade", or "Subversion of the

subject and dialectic of desire", to follow Jacques-Alain Miller's taxonomy of density (in Lacan, 1966:894).⁴⁵

Situated "*nel mezzo del cammin*" of the long "*dure e forte*" pages that compose the *Écrits*, "The Freudian Thing" proposes to go through (*tra-verser*) the Freudian field in order to enhance its conceptual landmarks somewhat left oblivious by the psychoanalytic practice in which Lacan aims to intervene, to *in-verser*, in order to make it more versed in the Freudian letters.

Besides this messianic purpose, "The Freudian Thing" can also be read as a "lover's discourse" ("*un discours amoureux*", after Barthes's title [1966]). Lacan's re-reading of Freud is carried out with the obstinacy and devotion of the lover. Supporting this act of love, the essay is dedicated -- with the discrete elegance that Eros sometimes requires -- "to Sylvia", an exceptional gesture that cannot

⁴⁵ Malcolm Bowie, in his study of Lacanian psychoanalysis, elects "The Agency of the Letter" and "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" as the most dense essays of the *Écrits*. His basis for such a selection is that they constitute the first elaborations of "Lacan's 'system'" (1991:44). I take issue here not so much with the measurability of depth as a criterion for selecting particular texts in detriment of others. More problematic is the presupposition that the magnitude and complexities of a thinker's body of work (especially when this thinker is someone like Lacan, who overtly confronts such attempts) can be reduced to a couple of texts. This questionable procedure is made explicit by the title Bowie gives to his book: *Lacan*. His search for the latter's system, for "Lacan" is partly responsible, in my view, for some hasty generalisations put forth in his provoking and perceptive reading.

go unnoticed.⁴⁶ Under Barthes's influence, I extract some fragments of this lover's discourse which seem emblematic of Lacan's traverse of the Freudian field. This selection, rather than attempting at a systematic account of his ideas, is done under the aegis that "*l'amour, c'est dans ce text le signe ... de ce qu'on change de raison ..., c'est à dire -- on change de discours*", as Lacan points out in the *Encore* (1975:20). That means that in this act of love desire is inscribed; not only Lacan's, but also my own, which informs the selection of fragments and their reading.

1. "*Je parle*", pour enchaîner: "*Il n'est parole que de langage*". [1966:412; 1977:124] "*Il n'est parole que de langage*" nous rappelle que le langage est un ordre que des lois constituent, desquelles nous pourrions apprendre au moins ce qu'elles excluent. (1966:413; 1977:125).

Behind the hyperbolic insistence on *parole* (as word as speech), and language, the gist of these lines can be found in the rhetorical interplay of antonyms: chaining and unchaining (which does not come across in the English translation). First of all there is the "chaining" of psychoanalysis to the domain of language, which constitutes an "etymological" movement in that psychoanalysis, as Anna O. poignantly defined it, is "a talking cure", i.e., a practice which entwines (*enchaîne*) the contingent dimension of the spoken word (*parole*) to the structural one of

⁴⁶ Out of the thirty-two essays and two appendixes that compose the *Écrits*, "The Freudian Thing" is the only one openly dedicated to someone. This act of naming adds other resonances to the essay, besides the strictly theoretical.

language. This knot constitutes the backbone of the clinical and theoretical practices of psychoanalysis: "*ces concepts ne prennent leur sens plein qu'à se orienter dans un champ de langage, qu'à s'ordonner à la fonction de la parole*", Lacan writes in "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis" (1966:246; 1977:39).

Another fundamental link (*enchaînement*) concerns that of language and the law which is illustrative of the sort of return Lacan makes towards Freud. For the latter, the law is accounted for in terms of an archeological metalanguage, of a discourse on and in search of origins. Lacan, albeit still concerned with the question of origins (as I will show below), places language where Freud had mythology. Language is not solely "an order", as he states above, but Lévi-Strauss's "order of orders",⁴⁷ a structure whose constitutive trait is to be found in "what it excludes", i.e., in that it interdicts, it says "no". And in here we find another dimension of the tie between speech and language that Lacan's constant play on homophones evinces. Psychoanalysis awards a privileged position to the spoken ("*je parle*), to the *dit*, which makes it a *dit-mension*, the estate of the spoken.

In respect of the small tolerance the English language

⁴⁷ In *Structural Anthropology* Lévi-Strauss writes that "the order of orders is not a mere logical reformulation of phenomena which have been subjected to analysis... By order of orders... I mean the formal properties of the whole that make up the subwholes..." (1963:333).

has towards the passive voice, we can undo the past participle above and ask, with Lacan: "who speaks?" (1966:411; 1977:123). The answer can be found in yet another rhetorical turn of "The Freudian Thing" -- a prosopopoeia -- through which Lacan announces: "Moi la vérité, je parle" (1966:409; 1977:121). This personification of truth takes place in a section called "*la chose parle elle-même*" (1966:408; 1977:121), i.e., the moment the Freudian thing is given voice to speak for itself.⁴⁸ The personification not only promotes the equation of the Freudian thing to truth but moreover, *qua* rhetorical procedure, underlines the fact that truth can only take place in language. In other words, truth is first and foremost a linguistic phenomenon, rather than a metaphysically inspired re(ve)lation. A demonstrative pronoun for thing/*chose* is *ça*, so that "*la chose parle*" can also be rendered as "*ça parle*".

This phrase is a central part of the issue Lacan takes up with the translation of Freud's maxim advanced at the conclusion of lecture XXXI, of the *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*: "where id was, there ego shall be" "Wo

⁴⁸ Lacan's self-casting in the role speaks for itself.... Nonetheless, the ambiguity of the French syntax should not escape us. "Moi la vérité, je parle" can be read as something like "I, truth, speak, and hence mark my words", which is what the English translation puts forth, and is corroborated by Lacan himself in one of the last essays of the *Écrits* ("La science et la vérité"): "Moi, la vérité, je parle" (1966:866). Another reading can be derived from the possible use in French of the *moi* as emphatic of the *je*, which could be rendered into English as "I [myself] speak the truth". Both cases, however, prefigure Lacan as the purveyor of truth.

Es war, soll Ich werden" (1933a:80). Followers of the ego-psychology approach, such as Heinz Hartmann, prefer to read this remark as supporting the notion of the primacy of the ego in psychic processes (Scott Lee, 1990:32-33). Contrary to this current, Lacan's translation/interpretation puts in relief first of all the *ça* as the true object of psychoanalysis, defined as "the word" of Freud's discovery (1966:413; 1977:125). This status is awarded not on the grounds of a supposedly mysterious substance the *ça* is endowed with, but due to its topological character: "*c'est d'un lieu ... qu'il s'agit*" (1966:417; 1977:129). In other words, the *ça* that speaks is not an entity, but a *space*.⁴⁹ In this aspect we have the first antonym of the chaining/unchaining pair which structures the above passage. In the winding characterisation of this space, Lacan unchains it from its most common sense as that mysterious threat which mobilises the ego's defensive mechanisms (1966:405; 1977:118), or as the seat of stubborn infantile drives (1966:431; 1977:141). The *ça* harbours what has been banned by/from language. This prohibition, however, is trespassed by the very fact that "*ça parle*": what language interdicts, the *ça* *inter-dit*. That is, it speaks, albeit not

⁴⁹ This space is commonly referred to in the psychoanalytic vocabulary by means of a theatrical metaphor: the stage, or in Freud's famous expression, "the other scene" (*ein anderer Schauplatz*). In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud writes that "the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life" (1900a:536; emphasis added).

in a "norm-al" way. "Tell the truth, but tell it slant" -- Emily Dickinson's poetic remark is echoed in Lacan's "La psychanalyse et son enseignement": "*la vérité de l'inconscient est ... à situer entre les lignes*" (1966:437). Dickinson's "slant" and Lacan's "in-between the lines" are figurative depictions of the figurative way in which the Freudian thing speaks, in which the truth of the unconscious manifests itself.

This depiction is embedded in (chained to) yet another level of figuration, namely the Artemis/Acteon myth that punctuates the entire essay and functions as an allegory of the psychoanalytic process. Analyst/analysand, like Acteon, are passionate hunters who go astray and inadvertently come across the naked truth/Artemis. Among the many resonances this epiphanic encounter carries for Lacan's search of the Freudian thing/truth, it seems important here to stress its link to Freud's punctual allusions to Polonius. Acteon's "in-directions" lead him to "find directions out". In Freud's language these errands acquire the name of "constructions" and the "direction" Artemis becomes the "historical truth". In the linguistic terms that frame Lacan's (con)version of (to) Freud, the contingency of Acteon's walk/speech reveals the naked structure of language which fragments whoever it snares.

Freud's recourse to Shakespeare and Lacan's to Ovid epitomise the nature of the link (*enchaînement*)

psychoanalysis establishes with literature. The latter, as Foucault has observed, "is fascinated by the being of language" (1973:383). The former, as Freud intimates and Lacan insists, is equally enamoured of the "being of language", but requires a different reading of the substantivised gerund. Even though (or because) it is fully aware of the existence of language psychoanalysis's major concerns is with what ex-ists of language, i.e., with what is produced by language. The means of this production and the product are examined, respectively, in the next two fragments.⁵⁰

2. *Un psychanalyste doit aisément s'y introduire à la distinction fondamentale du signifiant et du signifié, et commencer à s'exercer avec les deux réseaux qu'ils organisent de relations qui ne se recouvrent pas. (1966:414; 1977:126) Telles sont les bases qui distinguent le langage du signe. (1966:414; 1977:126).*

The antonymous metaphors of chaining and unchaining that organised the previous fragment are still in order here. The primary and major link is established with linguistics, in particular with Saussure's theorisations on language. Lacan draws in from the latter the binary pair that sustains his conceptual edifice, namely the notions of signifier and signified and the sort of relationship they entertain, which are to constitute the grounds of

⁵⁰ My allusion to Marx's notion of "means of production" finds a trace in "The Freudian Thing". In underlining the structural nature of language, Lacan remarks that language "*est si peu réductible à une superstructure qu'on vit le matérialisme lui-même s'alarmer de cette hérésie...*" (1966:414; 1977:125).

psychoanalytic practice. However, no sooner is the knot done than it is undone. Lacan's di-version from Saussure is reiterated in the course of the *Écrits* and of his seminars (e.g. *Encore*, 1975), and is particularly manifest in "The Freudian Thing".

For Saussure "language is a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas" (1966:10); a constitution Lacan openly opposes in laying out "the bases that distinguish language from the sign" (1966:415; 1977:126). The distinction resides in the very notion of the sign. Linguistics holds that the sign is made up by the relation between signifier and signified, a relation Lacan puts into question. The unity between concept (signified) and sound-image (signifier) that the *Course...* maintains as constitutive of the sign (1966:66-67) rests on the parity between signified and signifier (S/S) and on their interconnection. Lacan re-verses the order of these terms and, moreover, stresses the presence of the bar which prevents the unification of the two terms. In face of the fierce opposition posed by the bar, the sign collapses and the primacy of the signifier is established (S/s). The latter, and not the sign, thus becomes the constitutive feature of the structure of language.⁵¹

⁵¹ It is never too much to reiterate that my account of the notion of language, and in particular of signifier and signified is far from being exhaustive. The attempt to do otherwise not only would be antithetical to the very understanding of language put forth by Lacan as limiting and limited, but would also go beyond

"What is a signifier?", we should echo the question posed in *Encore* (1975:22). Lacan retains from Saussure the material quality of the signifier and reduces it to a letter (S), thus marking it as "matter, but not substance", as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe stress (1992:29). Nonetheless, the Lacanian signifier is removed from its traditional linguistic definition and inscribed into another field, that of "*linguisterie*". Rendered by the translators of Lacan's *Television* as "linguistery" (1990:5), this play on words delineates the scope of Lacan's di-version from Saussurean linguistics in respect to the notion of signifier. First of all it marks a change of direction, but not necessarily an opposite direction. Secondly, *linguisterie*, as a form of *diversion*, i.e., of entertainment, is emblematic of Lacan's "verse" and of his version of the signifier. As a "synchronic structure" the signifier is not tied up (*enchaîner*) to a particular idea/signified, but establishes links with other signifiers: *linguisterie* can be read/heard as chaining, for example, *linguistique*, *tricherie* (cheating), *tromperie* (lie, mistake), and also *hystérie*. In other words, the signifier for psychoanalysis defies univocality due to its constant slippage, its contiguous association with other signifiers. Furthermore, the

the scope of this introduction to the major conceptual supports of his notion of the paternal metaphor. The most acute analysis of this issue in Lacan is in my view Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe's *The Title of the Letter: A Reading of Lacan* (1992).

associations propelled by *linguisterie* enable (my) desire to speak. Being an effect of the prohibitions instituted by language, desire comes about in its defilement of the prohibitions by virtue of the associative possibilities offered by the signifier. Insisting on the linguistic frame for all psychic and psychoanalytic operations, Lacan inscribes the associations of the signifiers in rhetorical terms. The contiguous axe on which these associations take place is the ground for the first mode of action of the signifier: metonymy.⁵²

The metonymic links constitute what Lacan calls "*la chaîne du signifiant*" (1966:502), problematically translated by Alan Sheridan as "the signifying chain" (1977:153). I take issue with Sheridan's option of rendering the genitive "*du signifiant*" as "signifying" in that it dilutes the direct presence of the *signifiant*, and links this chain to the domain of the signified, thus reinstating the unity of signifier and signified. The point of Lacan's *linguisterie* is not the unity of the sign and the illusionary stability of meaning such notion can give rise to, but of its instability, of the fact that the signifier "slides".

The signifier *per se* does not carry any signification

⁵² Metaphor is the other mode of operation of the signifier distinguished by Lacan. The structure of language, he writes in "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire", rests on "*les deux versants les plus radicalux des effets du langage, nommément la métaphore et la métonymie, autrement dit les effets de substitution et de combination du signifiant...*" (1966:799; 1977:298).

(1966:501; 1977:152). The latter is defined in "The Freudian Thing" with an ambiguity that accounts for some of the complexities of the Lacanian text. On the one hand, signification is produced by the "sliding" of the signifier along the chain of signifiers. As it will later be clarified in "The Agency of Letter in the Unconscious", it is solely *"les correlations du signifiant au signifiant... [qui] donnent l'étalon de toute recherche de signification"* (1966:502; 1977:153). However, signification ultimately dwells upon the domain of the signified, as Lacan admits in "The Freudian Thing": *"ici ce qui domine, c'est l'unité de signification"* (1966:414; 1977:126). This hegemony would easily and necessarily lead to the reinstatement of the Saussurean sign, were it not for the insistence on/of the signifier as a structural principle. As Lacan indicates in the above fragment, signifier and signified constitute distinct networks, namely a synchronic structure and a diachronic set (*ensemble*), respectively. Whether we think of structure as the invariable elements of a given whole or as a system of relations established among these elements (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:278-279), it is an altogether different concept from that of the mathematical "set", which is constituted on the basis of an identity of its elements. In addition to this conceptual difference, signifier and signified are distinguished in Lacan in qualitative terms, i.e., in respect to their synchronic and diachronic aspects.

Saussure had already pointed to the dangers of confusing these two aspects, as we read in the *Course*...:

Synchronic linguistics will be concerned with the logical and psychological relations that bind together coexisting terms and form a system in the collective mind of the speakers. *Diachronic linguistics*, on the contrary, will study relations that bind together successive terms not perceived by the collective mind but substituted for each other without forming a system. (1966:99-100; emphases in original)

Lacan's signifier as synchronic and signified as diachronic echo Saussure's distinction on many levels.⁵³ Among them the systematic quality of the signifier versus the contingency of the signified should be retained here in order to be intertwined with two other Saussurean categories, i.e., those of language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*). These links illuminate Lacan's conceptualisations. Rather than insisting on a neat dichotomy between the collective and the individual which grounds the Saussurean synchrony/diachrony and his language/speech pairs, Lacan's signifier is an agency (*instance*) which comprises both the collective and the individual. As the fundamental structure of the unconscious, or in the Lacanian vocabulary, the place of the Other, signifier and the unconscious have to be understood as the individual precipitate of a

⁵³ In this respect, it is not gratuitous that Lacan decides to close the preceding section by urging his readers to read Saussure: "*si vous voulez en savoir plus, lisez Saussure...*" (1966:414; 1977:125).

collectivity.⁵⁴ As Lacan expounds in the "Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis",
"l'inconscient est cette partie du discours concret [i.e., speech] un tant que transindividuel... [language]"
 (1966:258; 1977:49); and corroborating the conflation of the collective and the individual, he adds: *"l'inconscient est ce chapitre de mon histoire qui est... censuré. Mais la vérité peut être retrouvée; le plus souvent déjà elle est écrite ailleurs."* (1966:259; 1977:50).

Lacan's signifier, thus, not only cannot be seen as overlapping with Saussure's, but occupies the structural place the latter had assigned to the sign. In view of such a fundamental role, the signified has to be taken with the literality its passive form advances: it is governed by the ways of the signifier (1966:414; 1977:126). But as the contrast with Saussure evinced, clear-cut dichotomies do not withstand Lacan's verse. Thus, the possible distinction between signifier as activity and signified as passivity is complicated by the introduction of signification as a third term. As already suggested, signification ultimately takes place in the domain of the signified, or as Lacan points out, what is dominant in this domain is *"l'unité de*

⁵⁴ It is this dialectics that Freud anticipates in *Moses and Monotheism* when he acutely criticises Jung's naive tautology of "the collective unconscious". As Freud argues, "I do not think we gain anything by introducing the concept of a 'collective' unconscious. The content of the unconscious, indeed, is in any case collective, a universal property of mankind" (1939a:132).

signification" (1966:414; 1977:126). This unity, however, is of an illusionary character due to two fundamental factors. First of all the very diachronic nature of the signified destabilises such unity. Secondly, given that the signified is "dominated" by the signifier, particularly by its sliding, *signification* necessarily cannot be reduced to pure referentiality, i.e., to the domain of the signified. Instead, it resides in the fact that it always refers to another *signification*, that it is grounded on the chain of signifiers, as my decomposing of *linguisterie* suggested. In other words, *signification*, as put forth in "The Freudian Thing", is a phenomenon that takes place along the horizontal line of the signifier as well as across the bar separating signifier and signified. Hence, it encompasses the two fundamental axes that, for Jakobson (1971), form the structure of language, namely those of metonymy and metaphor. It is by virtue of this double-axe structure that Lacan can claim that *signification* "*s'avère toujours en excès sur les choses...*" (1966:414; 1977:126). This surplus of meaning is expounded if we take into account the product of these linguistic means of production, i.e., the subject.

3. ...*Cette distinction fondamentale entre le sujet véritable de l'inconscient et le moi comme constitué en son noyau par une série d'identifications aliénantes...* [1966;417; 1977:128; his emphasis] *C'est en effet dans la désagregation de l'unité imaginaire que constitue le moi, que le sujet trouve le matériel signifiant de ses symptômes. Et c'est de la sorte d'intérêt qu'éveille en lui le moi, que viennent les significations qui en détournent son discours.*

(1966:427; 1977:137; emphasis in original)

At the beginning of "The Freudian Thing", Lacan announces that "*le sens d'un retour à Freud, c'est un retour au sens de Freud*" (1966:405; 1977:117). This declaration of intentions is again structured on ambiguity: *sens* is both meaning and direction. Thus we can read that the purpose, the directions that his discourse will follow are the ones laid out by Freud. Furthermore, he also seems to be claiming that psychoanalysis today only makes sense if it observes the meaning (*sens*) of the conceptual directives (*sens*) established by Freud. Psychoanalytic discourse in the 1950's is "out of joint" and Lacan's project is to "set it right".⁵⁵ This double *sens* of Freud, or of Lacan's reading of Freud, is to show that psychoanalytic theory and practice are only meaningful ("*prennent leur sens plein*") if placed in the field of language and governed by the function of speech (1966:246; 1977:39). This enterprise finds its meaning (*sens*) and ultimate direction (*sens*) in the being that approaches another with the very specific demand to be treated for his/her suffering.

Psychoanalysis conceives of this being within "the field and function of language and speech": it is first and foremost a speaking being, a *parl'être*, as Lacan has it

⁵⁵ It is significant that in the arrangement Lacan established for the *Écrits*, "The Freudian Thing" is followed by two essays devoted to the state of the art of psychoanalysis: "*La psychanalyse et son enseignement*" (1957) and "*Situation de la psychanalyse et formation du psychanalyste en 1956*".

(1975/76:23). This syncopated form puts forth a fundamental aspect of the psychoanalytic being. By inhabiting language, it necessarily loses something, as the elided "e" tersely articulates.⁵⁶ This lost letter is in a last analysis what the suffering being aims at retrieving and what the end of his/her analysis will reveal as constitutive of beings and thus a loss one has to learn to live with. In the terms set down by psychoanalysis, the being that speaks is in actual fact the *ça*: "*ça parle*" and "*ça souffre*", Lacan observes (1966:413; 1977:125). This means that the psychoanalytic being is a divided one due to the presence of the unconscious (*ça*), and in order to mark this specificity Lacan names it "subject".

In its subjection to language this subject undergoes a process of elision (e.g., the letter "e" above) which nevertheless insists on being spoken. This insistence is what will constitute for Lacan the difference between "an animal society" and a human one, whose structure is informed by the fact that *ça parle*, or as he later calls it: by the "incidence of truth" (1966:415; 1977:127).⁵⁷ That is, what makes the being human, a subject, is the ex-istence of the unconscious, of what is elided by the rules of language but which nonetheless insists on speaking. As Lacan later made

⁵⁶ The elision of the letter in Freud receives the metaphoric name of "castration".

⁵⁷ This crucial notion of incidence, with its resonances on insistence and *instance*, is absent in Sheridan's translation.

explicit in "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire":

L'inconscient, à partir de Freud, est une chaîne de signifiants qui quelque part (sur une autre scène, écrit-il) se répète et insiste pour interférer dans les coupures que lui offre le discours... (1966:799; 1977:297; emphases added)

The subject thus conceived is what Lacan is painstakingly trying to sketch out in the above fragment, and moreover, to differentiate from the disputable *moi/ego*. The subject for psychoanalysis is "*l'envers... de ce qu'on prend pour le sujet de la conscience*", Lacan asserts in the same essay (1966:818; 1977:315). Thus, instead of exclaiming with Descartes: "*Cogito ergo sum*", the subject in psychoanalysis cries out "*Actaeon ego sum*" (*Metamorphoses*, III, 230),⁵⁸ a cry Lacan attests to have heard in his punctual allusions to Ovid's version of the Diana/Acteon myth in the course of "The Freudian Thing".

The reference to Acteon anticipates the concerns Lacan expresses in the above fragment. The ego's constitution, as clearly shown in "The Mirror Stage", is of an alienating nature: like Acteon, the ego misrecognises its ways and pursues a track in the firm belief that it is following another, or, more tragically, thinks (*cogitat*) that he is "Acteon" when in fact he is a deer. Moreover, Ovid helps Lacan to oppose Descartes insofar as the former's myth

⁵⁸ References to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are taken from the Loeb Classical edition. Trans. Frank J. Miller (1929).

explores the very difference between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the statement (*énoncé*) which grounds subjectivity. This is the gap/trap that the structure of language/Diana sets up for its users, and that ego-psychology, which Lacan vehemently opposes, falls prey to.

Ovid's text is also helpful in that it spells out another fundamental operation of language. Acteon's dramatic appeal for recognition -- which epitomises the misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the ego's identity -- is followed by the remark that "words fail [lack] his desire" ("*verba animo desunt*"; III, 231; p.141). Psychoanalysis replicates this conclusion in its tenet that language is founded on the bar separating signifier and signified, that is, that there is no correspondence between word and thing. Thomas Aquinas's expression "*adæquatio rei et intellectus*", which Lacan evokes in "The Freudian Thing" (1966:420; 1977:131), is severed (barred) to reveal that the Latin *rei* (as thing/*chose*) is what speaks in the subject, or what makes it speak. In other words, the lack of relation between signifier and signified not only cannot be circumvented by imaginary attempts like the *cogito* motto, but institutes the very conditions of possibilities that make us speak and be, i.e., a *parl'être*.

It is because there is lack that we speak, that is, because the field of language is founded on the bar that

cuts across the relation between signifier and signified that we are made subjects. The interdiction the bar poses gives rise to yet another problem that Ovid acutely depicts: "words fail his desire". The dissymmetry between signifier and signified, or between the "ego/I" of the statement and the subject of the enunciation, accounts for the existence of desire. In this sense, desire can be seen as the expression of this gap created by the impossibility of a total coalescence between these two terms, as a cry for the elided "e" of the *parl'être*. But as Acteon's plea evinces, this "e", or in Lacanian terms, the object "o", is not the object of his desire. Acteon's desire, or desire *tout court*, is oriented not towards a particular object, but towards recognition from another, who initially can be impersonated by his hounds. On these grounds Lacan can assert that desire is constituted "*sous le signe de la médiation, il est désir de faire reconnaître son désir*" (1966:181). Ultimately, it is the desire to be recognised as a "desiring subject"⁵⁹ that founds desire.

Ovid's myth of misrecognition, which Lacan upholds as inherent to the very structure of the speaking subject (a tautology, again), brings forth another important dimension of the notion of the subject. "*Actaeon ego sum*" as an expression of desire (for recognition) passes through

⁵⁹ The quotation marks here aim at calling attention to the tautological nature of the expression, since for psychoanalysis to be a subject necessarily means to be a desiring subject.

language and, moreover, is addressed to another. Acteon appeals to an-other who might restore the irreconcilable difference between the idealised image (o') the ego (o) has of himself as the powerful hunter (Lacan's "imaginary identifications" above) and the bestial reality of his present condition of being hunted, i.e., subjected. The Lacanian theory of the subject expounds what the Ovidian story synthetically articulates: this other is of a different register than the other to whom the plea for recognition is addressed, and is thus marked by Lacan as (O). This Other Acteon appeals to is the one who can restore the loss installed by his contact with the structure of language/Diana. But as Ovid hastens to remark, language itself entails lack: "*verba... desunt*", an expression Lacan mathematizes as $S(\bar{A})$, and reads as the signifier of the lack in the Other.

"Acteon" as the imaginary unity of his ego (o) and his ideal image as hunter has been destroyed by virtue of his undesirable encounter with Diana as Other, i.e. as a figure who stands for the truth of the unconscious, as well as for the very structure of language. In purely psychoanalytic terms, this means that behind the relation the ego (o) establishes with its ideal image (o'), there is another, a "big Other" (O), which harbours the subject's (S) truth and whose manifestation not only is beyond the ego's conscious control, but also undesirable. It is in this dialectical

situation that the *ça parle*, and thus shatters the imaginary identifications which grounded the ego/Acteon's identity. In other words, what Ovid's account puts forth is psychoanalysis's forceful tenet that in every speech act there is always a third (O) implicated.⁶⁰

Lacan's return to Freud aims at reinstating this Third, *qua* subject of the unconscious, as the pivot of the analytic practice in order to modify the chains of the speaking being ("*en modifiant les amarres de son être*"; 1966:527; 1977:174). This process of unchaining and chaining, which has supported my depiction of Lacan's verse, of his version of psychoanalysis, can only take place in the domain of language and can be summarised, with Lacan, as "*la relation de l'homme au signifiant*" (1966:527; 1977:174). This constitutes the fulcrum of his notion of the Name-of-the-Father.

From Myth to Logos

Lacan's inscription of psychoanalysis in the field of language is structured in two types of sub-version: a) that

⁶⁰ This claim is not exclusive to psychoanalysis, but is advocated by linguistics, as Crapanzano remarks (1992:70-90). In relation to the psychoanalytic third "O", it should be noted that, like every letter (or signifier, since they are hardly distinguishable) in Lacan's verse, it is immersed in ambiguities, which cannot be extricated in the present introduction. Some of this signifier's main features, however, will be indicated in the course of this and the subsequent chapters.

of the Cartesian subject, which is revealed as a divided subject, due to the presence of the unconscious, and b) that of the Saussurean sign, which collapses in face of the barred relation between signifier and signified, thus ensuing the inflation of the former, which, in its turn, becomes the very ground for all the operations of language and the unconscious. Both cleavages are effected by a mathematical notation -- the barrier (/). In Saussure this bar mediated the relation between signified and signifier. In Lacan instead it acquires a foundational value, as Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe observe (1992:36), insofar as it is posited as that which creates the very conditions of possibility for the existence of language and speech. According to Lacan's remark quoted in the first fragment of the previous section, language is constituted by the laws of exclusion (1966:413; 1977:125).

The existence and insistence of the bar institutes a void, or gap, between signifier and signified which can be thought of as analogous to that which creates, for Genette, the basis for all figuration:

between the letter and the meaning... there is a gap, a space, and like all space, it possesses a form. This form is called a *figure*, and there will be as many figures as one can find in forms in the space that is created on each occasion between the line of the signifier... and that of the signified..., which is obviously another signifier offered as the literal one. (1982:47)

More than showing figure as an effect of the bar, Genette's definition can be seen as offering a precise description of

what constitutes the Lacanian bar. As the agency which installs the void between signifier and signified, and thus also marks the very limits of language, the bar cannot but become "another signifier offered as the literal one". This conceptual demarcation of the bar sets the grounds on which we can situate what Lacan calls the Name-of-the-Father.

First and foremost the concept functions as a metaphor, as a special form, or with Quintilian, a *conformatio* that gives form to the gap between signifier and signified. In consonance with Aristotle's definition of metaphor, the Name-of-the-Father can be seen as "the application of an alien name" (*Poetics*, 1457b 8; p.77) to the barrier which cleaves signifier and signified and articulates the very structure of language. Moreover, the Name-of-the-Father qua metaphor also befits Aristotle's valuative remark that the best metaphors are those that establish a relation of homogeneity between terms: "to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances" ("*tò gár eû metaphéreîn tò tò hómoion theōreîn estin*" (*Poetics*, 1459a 7-8; p.87). The homogeneity established between the bar and the Name-of-the-Father is of a functional nature: a "foundational" element of the "species" ("*eîdos*")⁶¹ of linguistic relations -- the

⁶¹ *Eîdos* is one of Aristotle's categories used to describe the four different ways through which the metaphorical transfer takes place. His complete definition reads: "metaphor is the application of an alien name by transfer either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or by analogy, that is, proportion" (*Poetics*, 1457b 7-10; pp. 77-79).

bar -- is substituted by one from the "species" of kinship relations -- the father. This rhetorical analogy finds support in Marcel Mauss's "precept that all social phenomena can be assimilated to language" (in Lévi-Strauss, 1987:63). However, another rhetorical figure seems to be at play here -- a chiasmus -- which reverses both Aristotle and Mauss. The Name-of-the-Father entails the transfer of a familiar (*kýrios*) name to the alien "barrier", and thus inflates the kinship relation to the point that it envelops linguistic structures.

This synecdochic quality of the Name-of-the-Father can be seen as part of Lacan's attempt to extricate the mythical aura of the Freudian father and to conceptualise this figure in radically linguistic terms. This conceptualisation, however, cannot be conducted exclusively within a linguistic frame, insofar as psychoanalysis is of the order of *linguisterie*. In other words, it entails the existence of the subject of the unconscious, of the fact that *ça parle*. This field defines both the function and the range of the concept of the Name-of-the-Father, whose splitting function is analogous to the barrier.

In view of the ambiguities characteristic of Lacan's "verse",⁶² which destabilise conclusive (i.e., closed) assertions, the metaphoric status of the Name-of-the-Father

⁶² Ambiguity is one of the major mechanisms through which Lacan's text poses fierce resistance to paraphrasing and systemic appropriations, like to ones I am attempting to do.

is further complicated. In various moments of the *Écrits*, Lacan insists that it is a "pure signifier" (e.g., 1966:556; 1977:199). As such, it should comply with the laws of the signifier indicated above, namely, those of contiguity, of the metonymic chaining of one signifier to another, as suggested in my reading of Lacan's *linguisterie* in the previous section. This imperative is observed by Lacan: he makes the signifier slide along the metonymic axis (by taking the agent for the act, i.e., the *nom* for the *non*) and in this movement establishes the grounds for the metaphoric conflation the "Name-of-the-Father" promotes. The metonymic association advances the two constitutive features of the *Nom-du-père*:⁶³ the *nom* (name) the father gives (so far, to the barrier) is homophonically associated to *non* (no), to the principle of exclusion which founds the laws of language. Thus, the signifier of the *Nom-du-père* (henceforth referred to as *NP*) effects not only the symbolic process of nomination but also founds in the prohibition the very conditions for symbolisation to exist. It is through the metonymic association that the *NP* becomes a metaphor, a condensation that gives form to the process of symbolisation. This syncopation of metonymy and metaphor is a procedure which is not alien to rhetoric. Eco's claim that "metonymic relations... ought to be considered as the basis

⁶³ More so than with *linguisterie*, the sliding of this signifier is only possible in French.

for every metaphoric substitution" (1986:114) summarises a position held by metaphorologists like Genette and Paul de Man (in Culler, 1983:193-202). The convergence of metonymy and metaphor in the constitution of the *NP* is ultimately informed by Jakobson's identification of the structure of language in terms of two axes or poles: the metonymic and the metaphoric ones (1971), which become in Lacan the two modes (*versants*) of operation of the signifier (1966:495; 1977:148).

The rhetorical ground on which Lacan sets the metaphor of the *NP* is yet another instance of the fascination "with the being of language" (in Foucault's expression, 1973:383) that psychoanalysis shares with literature. It is this tone that informs Lacan's untying of Freud's mythical articulation of the father, and this "being" that guides his reconceptualisation of the father figure. One difference is immediately salient in the comparison of both formulations: Freud, on the one hand, endeavours to account for the existence of a father for the law, or for the law of the father, and in this attempt is led to a mythical expedition geared towards establishing a mythical *archē* which would thus explain (and justify) a certain state of affairs. Lacan does not entirely refute the archeological project; but, rather than looking for an explanation for it, posits the

paternal law as a given *archē*.⁶⁴ This centrality is analogous to the one Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe indentify, and critique, in the foundational status of the bar:

One must recognize in this punctual (and punctuating) value of the bar what Lacan's discourse has posited as a principle: the bar is *foundational* or *originary*. It is the *archē* of a system which, while systematizing the division, the lack, or the hole in the places of origin, has nevertheless maintained its own "archaic" value of systematicity -- that is, of origin and center -- without questioning it further. (1992:112; emphasis in original)

The position of the bar in relation to language is similar to the one of the *NP* vis-à-vis the subject. This means that, as indicated above, the *NP* performs for the subject the actions of naming (*nom*) and interdiction (*non*), actions which have to be inflected within the psychoanalytic grammar.

Freud's notion of the father, as indicated, was unfolded in terms of a three-faceted figure sculptured in a chronological sequence: the obscene father, the *père-jouissance*, in Silvestre's term (1991:91), is murdered by his sons and gives rise to an idealised version of the father which sustains the sons' identity as, concomitantly, individuals and members of a community (literally, a brotherhood). Besides revealing that "the father" is obviously a question of the sons, the constitution of the

⁶⁴ The multiple resonances of the Greek *archē* should be retained here: at the same time that it is "origin", "first cause", it is also "sovereignty", "government", "magistrature", as Liddell and Scott indicate (1994).

fraternity exposes the violence on which it rests, or in René Girard's broader terms, the violence implicit in the sacred (1979). The combination of these two facets of the father, in turn, ensue a third figure -- the dead father -- who becomes the agent and representative of the law. In my account of the Freudian father I also indicated that what happens to each of these father figures informs the Lacanian triadic orders -- the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic,⁶⁵ respectively -- defined by Françoise Hurstel as "the three planes or registers which determine the possible modes of relation of the subject to the world" (in Augé et al., 1989:244). Lacan's triad is not circumscribed to the chronological sequence imposed by the narrative structure of Freud's myth, despite the fact that he ascertains the prerogative of the Symbolic as the register which enables symbolisation and thus the differentiation of the three registers.⁶⁶

This prerogative is grounded on the understanding of the father in terms of Freud's dead father. "What is a father?", asks Lacan, rhetorically, in "Subversion of the

⁶⁵ In order to distinguish the Lacanian orders from their common acceptations I have opted for capitalising them.

⁶⁶ It seems important to stress the non-evolutionary frame of these three orders in Lacan in face of the commonly held notion, specially in the United States, of the contrary, as, for example, the one put forth by Jonathan Scott Lee in his so-to-be comprehensive reading of Lacan. The titles of some of the chapters of his *Jacques Lacan* (sic) suffice to illustrate this equivocation: "Chapter Three: From the Imaginary to the Symbolic", and "Chapter Four: From the Symbolic to the Real" (1990:vii).

Subject and Dialectic of Desire". "It is the dead Father" (1966:812; 1977:310), that is, Lacan's twisted (figurative) way of positing and announcing the father as a given *archē*, of proclaiming the *Non-du-père*. This "archaic" status will enable him to state later that "the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real... revolve around the *Non-du-Père*" (1975/76:17), yet another variation of the foundational role the *NP* plays in the constitution of the subject. This role is better understood if we heed Lacan's rhetorical manoeuvre of hyphenation, rather than attempt to decompose it.

The father is neither the sole nor the major concern at play in the *NP*. If we were to inflect it, the nominative would be the case of the name (*nom*), whereas the father would play the genitive role -- in the multiple resonances that classical languages offer us -- of being the progenitor of the name, and so of inscribing it into a genus (whose ambiguities are also to be heard), and ultimately of having the property of the name, of being the de-nominator, the beholder and giver of the proper name. In this sense, the *NP* can be seen as a metaphor for what the social sciences know as patrilinearity, i.e., the organisation of the transmission of material and symbolic goods in a given community around the paternal line. And as Lévi-Strauss reminds us, this transmission, or heredity, is part of an exchange system and thus presupposes a giver and a taker (1969:30). In the case of Freud's myth the exchange took

place between the father and his sons, and related exclusively to the exchange of women, the community's "most precious possession" (Lévi-Strauss, 1969:62). This is not the case of the Lacanian NP. Its inheritors are both sons and daughters, which does not mean, however, that they entertain a symmetrical relation vis-à-vis the "giver". The fact that the NP is overtly articulated as a metaphor cannot escape us. Qua metaphor it overflows the boundaries of kinship relations and stands for a principle of organisation, of "*l'ordre et la norme... qui disent au sujet ce qu'il faut faire comme homme ou femme*", as Lacan clarifies (1966:849).⁶⁷ In other words, in the process of giving a name, the NP "interpellates" the subject as man or woman.⁶⁸ This interpellation takes place in the setting of

⁶⁷ This crucial definition of the NP is given in the essay "*Position de l'inconscient*", which has been translated by Bruce Fink and published in its entirety in Feldstein et al. (1995:259-277). Fink's translation reads: "order and norms... which tell the subject what a man and a woman must do" (1995:276). Two problematic changes are made here. The pluralisation of "the norm" and, more serious, the suppression of the personal pronoun "il". "The order and norm" of the NP tells the subject what s/he must do as a man or a woman, it does not tell her/him what men and women in general must do.

⁶⁸ The notion of interpellation is used here in consonance with Louis Althusser's understanding of the term. In "*Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*", Althusser writes that "ideology interpellates the individual as subject" (1981:107). My reference to Althusser aims at calling attention to certain similarities between his notion of ideology and Lacan's NP as constitutive of subjectivity. This is how far the comparison can go, since the Althusserian formulation rests on the prior existence of an entity -- the individual -- whereas Lacan holds that we do not become subjects, but are born as such. Moreover, the latter's subject is grounded on notions like the unconscious and desire, which are not present in the former.

language, as its overtly metaphoric status suggests, and in particular within another metaphorical space that Freud called "the Oedipus complex".

The paternal metaphor functions as Lacan's metaphorical way of addressing Freud's mythical notion of "the Oedipus complex". As the former admits in his 1969-1970 seminar, *L'envers de la psychanalyse*: "j'ai... parlé... de la métaphore paternelle. Je n'ai jamais parlé de complexe d'Œdipe que sous cette forme (1991:129). This refusal is explained much earlier in the "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire" in terms of a conceptual clarification: "a myth is not enough to support a rite, and psychoanalysis is not the rite of the Oedipus complex" (1966:818; 1977:316). What seems to animate Lacan's assertion is the untying of the structural feature of myths from their variable presentifications, or abandoning Lévi-Strauss in favour of a psychoanalytic terminology, the identification of the principle which would enable the emergence of the "latent content" of myths out of their "manifest content".⁶⁹ This principle is, for Lacan, the paternal

⁶⁹ "Manifest" and "latent content" are expressions coined by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a) in order to differentiate the dream as recounted by the analysand (the manifest content) and the subsequent content which emerges after the analytic interpretation (the latent content). In *L'envers de la psychanalyse* Lacan (1991:130) alludes to the former expression in order to enhance the similarities between the language of myth and that of dreams, and moreover, to advocate the need for the identification of the structural principle so that the analytical work can move beyond the manifest content of myths.

metaphor.

From the Oedipus complex Lacan retains two fundamental, conflating, notions. First of all he reconceptualises the psychoanalytic "complex" as "*une certaine nombre de relations psychiques typiques où s'exprime une certaine structure sociale*" (1966:89). The *tópos* of the articulation of the psychic and the social could be, in a Lévi-Straussian perspective, the elementary kinship relations (1969). Lacan posits the "dead father" as this *topos*, and, while retaining the kinship terminology, attempts to differentiate it from any anthropological elaboration, and insists on its "cadaveric" nature: "the corpse is a signifier" (1966:818; 1977:316). The attempt to extricate the *NP* from any "culturalist" perspective should also be read as a response to Freud's problematic reliance on ethnology. Lacan's explicit disciplinary debt is with religion, as he admits: the *NP* is what "*la religion nous a appris à invoquer comme le Nom-du-Père*" (1966:556; 1977:199).⁷⁰

"Invocation" is a key dimension of the concept of the

⁷⁰ This acknowledgement supports François Regnault's claim that "the concept of the Name-of-the-Father comes from religion, not from science" (in Feldstein et al., 1995:68). Regnault's essay "The Name of the Father" performs an important reading of this notion in Lacan. Nonetheless, I do not entirely subscribe to his exclusive "affiliation" of the concept to the field of religion. As my frequent references to, for example, Lévi-Strauss aim to suggest, Lacan entertains a dialogue with other disciplines in the grounding of his elaborations of the *NP*. (It is worthy of note that even though Lacan is the one to fully conceptualise the father in psychoanalytic theory, there are comparatively less studies devoted to him than to Freud's figurations. I read this emphasis mainly as a reinforcement of the conceptual parameters laid out by Lacan.)

NP (yet another problematic erasure of the English translation), insofar as it rests on the interplay of presence and absence which grounds the figurative quality of the concept. As a "corpse", the absent father is made present in the form of the Law that establishes the prohibition of incest. Again Lacan's effort to disentangle sociological undertones from the NP should not be overlooked. As in Oedipus's story, it is not the manifest Jocaste/the mother that the father interdicts, but rather "the mother", as Freud's faint metaphor for the "renunciation of the drives" seems to suggest (1939a:113-114). In an earlier paper -- "*Propos sur la causalité psychique*" -- Lacan conforms both to Freud's paternal imperative and to its metaphorical expression: the father is "*une personne qui domine et arbitre [i.e., the archē] le déchirement avide et l'ambivalence jalouse qui fondaient les relations premières de l'enfant avec la mère...*" (1966:182). In this rupture (*déchirement*) lies the interdiction the NP carries into effect.⁷¹ Lacan's rupture of the synonym between mother and child will in later essays be formulated in terms of the child's inscription in language. This

⁷¹ The risk of deducting from this cut an evolutionary trajectory of the three registers is not remote. A hasty reader of Lacan could infer that there is such a thing as a pre-verbal, pre-NP, Imaginary "stage" in which the infant enjoys a total amalgamation with the mother. In this respect I could evoke a remark made to me by the psychoanalyst Jacques Hassoun (who has also written extensively on the NP -- e.g. "The Names of the Father", 1995), that the air the child breathes at the moment of birth can be taken as its first experience of the NP.

inscription ensues the subject, i.e., the one who is subjected to the laws of the signifier and is another possible reading of the mark "~~ø~~" (e.g., 1966:805; 1977:303). It marks, as indicated before, the speaking subject, as well as the desiring subject. The relation between the *NP* and desire needs further expansion.

As a third, the *NP* occupies the place of the Other, the necessary term for any linguistic interaction to exist. This Other, however, is the ultimate place of the signifier of the Mother,⁷² the Lacanian form (metaphor) for the constituting object of human desire. In his words: it is "as desire of the Other that man's desire finds form" (1966:813; 1977:311). By promoting a cleavage in the relation between mother and child the *NP* institutes the former as other, and ultimately as Other, to whom the child's incessant demand (basically for love, sustains Lacan)⁷³ is addressed and, by virtue of its passage through language, is doomed to unfulfillment and thus acquires the status of desire. A dialectic presides over the constitution of desire as such. As remarked in the previous section, the desire of the subject is the desire of recognition, particularly of the

⁷² Lacan's capitalisation is a terse reminder that the Mother should not be taken synonymously with the biological mother.

⁷³ Lacan observes that "desire begins to take shape in the margin in which demand becomes separated from need..." Demand, he specifies a few paragraphs down, is "the demand for love, in which the subject remains in subjection to the Other..." (1966:813; 1977:311).

Other (Mother) who stands as the signifier for the subject's irretrievably lost object (i.e., *das Ding*).⁷⁴ The dialogical articulation of desire confronts the subject with the desire of the Other/Mother, that is, with a mark that it is also lacking, as Ovid so perspicaciously noticed in Acteon's demand. In this void Lacan places the paternal metaphor as the stabilising Other who sends back to the subject his own question, as a reminder that there is no Other of the Other, i.e., that *das Ding* is unattainable or, with Ovid, that *verba* fail us. That is, it is the structure of language that precludes the plenipotentary relation between signifier and signified, that bars the subject. The *NP* is the articulatory principle that enables Lacan to hold that "the law of man has been the law of language since the first words of recognition presided over the first gifts" (1966:272; 1977:61).

For the subject the *NP* is an instance and the *instance* (agency) of the structural preclusion enforced by the law. In the psychoanalytic vocabulary preclusion is metaphoricised as "castration", a structural feature of the constitution of the subject which, similarly to the *NP*, is a precipitate of Freud's Oedipus complex. Lacan retains the mythical reference, I would argue, as an allusion to the

⁷⁴ Lacan develops the complex notion of *das Ding* in Seminar VII -- *L'éthique de la psychanalyse* -- specially in chapters IV and V (1986:55-86).

phallus⁷⁵, i.e., the simulacrum carried out at the opening of the irreverent *kōmoi*, the comic processions of ancient Greece. Here, as there, the phallus is not synonymous to the penis, but is a signifier of the comic quiproquod of sexual difference in which some believe they have it, while others believe they can sustain the illusion of being it for someone else. But as the Greek revellers showed, in the place of the penis, of omnipotence, there was a grotesque prop which ridiculed the synonym between penis and potency, or wholeness.

Castration is another name for the non-wholeness, for the hole the *NP* institutes and names as "subject", i.e., as lacking. As previously indicated, since Freud's elaboration of the primordial father as the all-enjoying one, who thus precludes the sons's enjoyment, lack (castration) in the psychoanalytic vocabulary means non-enjoyment, lack of *jouissance* (Silvestre, 1991:94). In this respect castration marks men and women indistinguishably or, as Socrates formulated less polemically, "every man [*anthropós*] is mortal". The *NP* can be seen as an expression of mortality, of finitude, which subjects all beings and makes them desiring. That is why Lacan insists on "the true function of

⁷⁵ As with other Lacanian notions, my treatment of the phallus is more than schematic. For a detailed discussion of the question I refer to the introductions by Jacqueline Rose and Juliet Mitchell to the collection they edited of Lacan's essays on feminine sexuality (Rose and Mitchell, 1982). A quick and reliable definition of it is given by Regnault as a signifier "which represents something missing" (in Feldstein et al., 1995:69).

the Father, which is fundamentally to unite (and not to set in opposition) a desire and a Law..." (1966:824; 1977:321). Through the agency of the *NP* desire becomes what the Lacanian verse articulates as a "*défense, défense d'outre-passer une limite dans la jouissance*" (1966:825), i.e., a defense and a prohibition against trespassing the limits of mortality, which in its turn, guarantees the possibility of enjoyment (*jouissance*).

The pursuit of *jouissance*, which is opened up by the dead father,⁷⁶ is what will differentiate the Lacanian subject vis-à-vis sexuality. The masculine position (to avoid an equivalence of sex and gender) is marked by the attempt to shun this lack by obtaining from the other (sex) his phallus, i.e., the object that can fulfill his desire. The illusionary (and Imaginary) character of this pursuit is stressed both by the fact that the phallus is a simulacrum, and that desire, by definition, is unfulfillable. This position is also called by Lacan phallic *jouissance*. The feminine position equals the masculine as regards the phallic *jouissance*, in its "*Manque-à-être*" or "Want-to-be". However, it has a supplementary quality to it, "*un En-Trop*", "a Too-much-of-it" (1966:826; 1977:323). That is to say that in the position "woman" the subject is placed as "the object o" of man's desire, as that which can "complement" his

⁷⁶ This is not remote from Freud's postulations. It was only after the death of the father that the sons guaranteed their access to enjoyment (of the women).

lack/castration (which also ensues from the sexual difference). But, as Lacan writes, "woman" is "*pas-toute*" (1975:75), i.e., she is not the complement of man, she is not that which will make him *tout/complete*. In the role of being the phallus, as the signifier of lack, "woman" knows (in the sense of *savoir* and not *connaître*) she is not whole, which Lacan controversially formulated as "~~T~~he woman does not exist" (1975:75). That is, feminine *jouissance* entails a different sort of relation towards castration, one of acceptance, even if momentary, which in its turn enables "woman" to enjoy a privilege (and a right)⁷⁷ unknown to the phallic *jouissance* or masculine position (Clément, 1981:67-9). In other words, feminine *jouissance* is the position which goes beyond the phallic *jouissance*.

This pantomime of sexual difference is informed by the *NP*. It is the principle which orchestrates the differentiation of subjects and their positioning within the frame of sexuality. Psychoanalysis claims the universality of this principle, which partly resonates Lévi-Strauss's tenet concerning the universality of the incest prohibition (1969:8-9). The Lacanian *NP*, specially in its tying of desire and *jouissance*, underlines this universality and gives it a gendered name -- the masculine. As an operative principle the *NP* renders manifest the masculine as the

⁷⁷ This legal aspect which the notion of *jouissance* carries cannot be rendered by the English "enjoyment".

dominant principle, but concomitantly reduces its scope insofar as feminine *jouissance* is conceived of precisely as that which can go beyond the phallic function, a *pas-toute*, which can be rendered into English, literally, as that which denies universality.

"There is One for whom the phallic function does not apply" is the verbal translation of Lacan's mathematical notation in the *Encore* (1975:73). This One is the *NP*, the "corpse" which as such stands outside the Law and thus can invoke it: "in the Name of the Father". That is why Juliet's plea to Romeo to "deny thy father, and refuse thy name" (II,ii) can only be articulated within a tragic language, which constantly calls into question and attempts to trespass castration, or the limits which make us men, women, and mortals. The *NP* is this threshold, the principle "by means of which life, with its functions and norms, attains its foundation in the mute repetition of Death; conflict and rules their foundation in the naked opening of Desire; significations and systems their foundation in a language which is at the same time Law". Foucault's poetic depiction of psychoanalysis tersely accounts for the statutes and range of the *NP* (1973:374). Between life and death, prohibition and *jouissance*, the Law inscribes itself, not once and for all, nor even in one language, as I will attempt to show in what follows.

PART II

THE LAW IN EFFECT:
THE ORESTEIA**Introduction**

Literature and psychoanalysis have been approximated so far on the grounds of their partaking not only of the awareness of the metaphoricity of language, but moreover, of their reliance on metaphor as a means to construct their cognitive universe. This common trait, however, does not ensure a relation, let alone a parity. The approximation of the two bodies of knowledge in the critical activity more than often rests on a hierarchy in which psychoanalysis, *qua* theory, is made to bear light on the fictional text. As Shoshana Felman rightfully observes, and critiques, "literature's function, like that of the slave, is to serve precisely the *desire* of psychoanalytical theory -- its desire for recognition..." (1982:6; emphases in original). This servitude can be severely undermined if we heed the literary references that enable the articulation of key psychoanalytic concepts, like the "Oedipus complex", as well as some fictional procedures, such as Freud's conjectures about the promordial father, which sustain its entire theoretical edifice, and in particular the notion of the "paternal metaphor".

These references and procedures are not mere textual

supports literature has furnished psychoanalysis with, but denote a more intimate relationship between the two. Lévi-Strauss's remark that "psychoanalysis is already present in myth" (in Loraux, 1990:24) can be extended to the literary field in order to indicate the precedence the latter has over fundamental psychoanalytical concerns. Among them, the notion of the Name-of-the-Father (*NP*) is a salient case. As I will argue in the course of the next three chapters, Aeschylus's trilogy can be seen as constructing the paternal imperative within a frame of reference that informs Freud's depiction of the paternal figure(s), particularly in *Totem and Taboo*.

The anteriority of the literary over the psychoanalytical, on the other hand, should not ensue a reversal of hierarchical positions. Literature cannot account for the specificities of psychoanalysis. As a theoretical and clinical practice, psychoanalysis's major concern lies in the operations of the unconscious, that is, in making a latent structure manifest in order to dissolve a symptomatological frame. Such an aim is a *minima* distant from the fictional realm. Nonetheless, the attempt to render manifest certain repressed material makes of psychoanalysis an exegetical activity, or a "hermeneutics of the repressed", in Bal's expression (1988:7). As such, it is characterised not only by the privileging of certain thematics, e.g., the repressed, but also by the deployment

of interpretative strategies, as for example, the analytical attention to repetition, slips of the tongue, and to rhetorical devices like metonymy, which grounds the principle of free association. In its attention to the linguistic fabric of (the analysand's) discourse, psychoanalysis constitutes itself as a mode of reading which converges towards the principles of literary criticism (or of some of its currents). This convergence is relevant to the critical practice insofar as it directs the analytical eye to textual procedures and contents which are kept in the background, repressed, by other critical approaches. In bringing the background to the foreground, a psychoanalytically informed reading at its best should perform an obverse or "counter-coherent" reading. According to Bal, this type of reading "relates the 'official' reading to what it leaves out; it relates the texts to the needs of the reader; it relates everything that is denied importance to the motivations for such denials. The countercoherence will start precisely where repression is most flagrant" (1988:17).

It is within a frame thus inflected that I conduct my reading of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*. A frame which is all the more relevant given that this text is emblematic¹ of a kind

¹ The paradigmatic quality of the *Oresteia* vis-à-vis Greek tragedy and literature in general is awarded by scholars of different critical perspectives (e.g., Zeitlin, 1978:149; Goldhill, 1992:ix), and finds in Gilbert Murray one of its most hyperbolic instances. In his *Aeschylus, the Creator of Tragedy* he qualifies

of discourse -- tragedy -- which is formed in Athens at the end of the sixth-century B.C.. According to Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal Naquet's influential argument, Greek tragedy is characterised by a tension generated from the clash of two world views: one which belongs to a mythical, heroic past, versus the new juridical system the *polis* is trying to set up (1988:13-18). As Sophocles's *Antigone* concisely puts forth, the conflict or *ágon* takes place between a divine sense of justice and a human *nómos*. In addition to its thematic concern with what can or cannot be said and done, the tragic idiom is composed around very specific codes which fix its proper and appropriate terms, as Aristotle's *Poetics* indisputably attests. The thematic and formal traits and constraints of the tragic discourse inform my discussion of the *Oresteia* qua an articulation of the principle of the Name-of-the-Father.

Furthermore, an analysis of the NP, as the name of the general law of language, necessarily entails the examination of the very linguistic constituents through which the Name is articulated. That is to say that my discussion is grounded on what has been defined, since Aristotle, as the foundational elements of the tragic language: "Tragedy is the imitation of actions" ("*tragōdía mimesis práxeōs*"),

the *Oresteia* as "the greatest achievement of the human mind" (1940:179). A more focussed appraisal is made by Oliver Taplin, for whom the *Oresteia* is "the greatest creation of the Greek theatre" (1977:3).

proclaims the *Poetics* (1449b 24). Given that tragedy, besides being a dramatic genre (or sub-genre), is first and foremost a theatrical language, my analysis of these two Aristotelian landmarks of tragedy is grounded on a semiological reading of the theatrical space² and of the possibilities it opens for psychoanalytical counterparts.

The Triadic Structure of the Greek Stage

Peter Brook's claim that "I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage" (1969:9), even though apt to describe the flexibility of the modern stage (especially when under his direction), is untenable as regards the theatre of fifth-century Athens. The latter is first and foremost one of the major topographic landmarks of the Athenian *polis*, which include the *agorá* (as both market-place and forum of public debate); the gymnasium, and the Assembly (or *boulē*) (Goldhill, 1992:1-21). As a space of/for the *polis* the theatre is at once a civic, religious and aesthetic space (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 1988; Loraux, 1987; Goldhill, 1988). Such overdetermination hinders the contingent character of Brook's (and modern) theatrical space and,

² My concern in this reading is not to provide a thorough account of the Greek stage, something which has already been notably done by, for example, Pickard-Cambridge (1946), Margarete Bieber (1961), and more recently, Oliver Taplin (1977), and Erika Simon (1982). Rather, I shall focus on specific traits of the theatrical architecture of the fifth-century Athenian stage and explore its relation to the dramatic fabric of the *Oresteia*.

furthermore, is inscribed into the very architecture of this space, as I will argue below.

In the first half of the fifth century B.C., a wooden tent was built onto the Greek stage.³ Raised at the back of the *orchēstra*, or dancing-space, and with its front towards the audience, this wooden building received the name of *skēnē*,⁴ and its construction bore paramount consequences to the theatrical performances as well as to the nature of dramatic compositions. Among the many reasons (some of them impalpable) that informed the building of the *skēnē* (henceforth *skene*), a possible one can be found in the fact that the actors needed a place, hidden from the audience, where they could dispose of their mundane attire, and put on the appropriate robes, masks, and buskins that would befit the stature of the characters they were about to play.

Besides this pragmatic function, the *skene* can be regarded as performing more symbolic roles. From the actors'

³ Assertions on the Greek theatre (as distinct from its dramatic aspects) have to be taken with a reticent attitude. The approximate date for the construction of this "tent" is one, among many, points of dispute among classicists. Anti (1947) dates it from the beginning of the century, whereas more contemporary scholars -- like Taplin (1977), Simon (1982), and Padel (1992) -- agree on a later date: around 460 B.C.. What is relevant to my argument is that the advent of this wooden building is prior to the first production of the *Oresteia* (458 B.C.). As Taplin claims, "while the *skene* is clearly and repeatedly used in the *Oresteia*, there is no evident trace of its use in the other four [Aeschylean] tragedies" (1977:453).

⁴ Simon argues that the translation of *skēnē* as tent is misleading, since it resembled much more "a wooden construction with a flat roof" (1982:5).

point of view, it houses the ritual which marks the passage from the actual to the representational, from the worldly to the sacred. The actors enter the skene as ordinary citizens,⁵ and come out of it as gods or semi-divine figures. In this sense, the skene can be seen as a diacritical mark which not only distinguishes but also mediates between reality and fiction.

This diacritical skene is also meaningful as far as the audience is concerned. According to Ruth Padel, "spaces [in the Greek theatre] were named after the role people played in them" (1992:341). In this respect, the spectators' place is called *theatron*, i.e., the place where people watch, see, observe (*theasthai*).⁶ From their seats the spectators have visual access only to what is performed in front of the skene, i.e., in the *pro-skēnion* or, in modern theatrical terminology, the *proscenium*.⁷ The other side the skene, the

⁵ As Goldhill extensively argues (1988 and 1992), only citizens were allowed to be actors. This class requisite is accrued of a gender dimension given that citizenship was a status attributed to males only, provided they were born of an Athenian father and the mother was the daughter of another citizen (Loraux, 1990).

⁶ The fact that this signaling of the audience's task came to signify an entire art form -- the theatre -- is significant. Not only does it mark the spectator as an essential feature of the theatre, but it also stresses the visual quality of this art form. The emphasis on visibility is clearly noticed, for example, when we compare the name given by the Romans to the same part of the theatrical edifice -- the *auditorium* -- or the listening-place (Bieber, 1961:56-60).

⁷ According to Taplin, this term is probably absent from fifth-century vocabulary. The various technical names we have for this space -- e.g., *proskēnion*, *episkēnion*, *prothyron* -- are "in

backstage, is traditionally referred to in studies of the Greek theatre as a technical space used for the storage of props, costumes, and different kinds of machinery. Emphasising its purely technical function, this space is identified by, for example, Fiechter as "skenotheke" (in Bieber, 1961:59).⁸ In even more neutral terms, Pickard-Cambridge calls it a "hall" (1946:2). More recent, semiologically inflected studies of the Greek theatrical space⁹ read symbolic layers in this back space, but fail to distinguish it with any particular name. This area is of foremost importance to the present analysis. In order to mark its relevance, I shall first of all coin a name for it, since the naming of the nameless (Bal, 1988:9-10) conforms to the principles of the counter-coherent reading, insofar as it brings the repressed nameless into the foreground. Stressing its opposite position in relation to the recognised *pro-skēnion*, I would call this space the "*opísō-*

all probability irrelevant to the fifth century" (1977:452). It is important to stress that statements concerning the Greek stage, such as this, abound with relativising nouns and adjectives, such as possibility, probability, and so forth, which should be taken as a clear warning that we are treading on speculative grounds.

⁸ The compound name "skenotheke" is Fiechter's own creation, as Bieber points out (1961:59), where the Greek *thēkē* refers generally to "a case to put anything" (Liddell and Scott, 1994).

⁹ In the last decades, I believe in the wake of Gaston Bachelard's influential *The Poetics of Space* (1969), the theatrical space has been the object of semiological studies, such as Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* (1969), and Patrice Pavis's *Languages of the Stage* (1982). As regards the Greek stage, Oliver Taplin's *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus* (1977), and Ruth Padel's "Making Space Speak" (1992), constitute in my view the most important references.

skēnion".¹⁰ As an invisible area, the *opísō-skēnion* shelters not only the technical apparatuses of a production, but moreover, actions that "men cannot play" on the *pro-skēnion* (henceforth *proscenium*). In this sense, my understanding of the Greek *opísō-skēnion* encompasses the two distinct notions put forth by modern theory: the theatrical backstage and the dramatic offstage. That is, it refers both to the technical supporting space (backstage), and to the "dramatic license" playwrights make recourse to of having a scene (usually a crucial one) "happening" away from the spectators' field of vision (offstage). My devising of such a name also aims at stressing the visual dimension of the Greek theatre and drama as part of the dialectical relation between "things visible and things invisible" which Louis Gernet identifies as inherent to Greek thought (1981:343-351).¹¹

¹⁰ The preposition *opísō* can be translated as back or behind (Liddell and Scott, 1994). My "baptism" of this theatrical topography is not entirely arbitrary. Even though I have not come across any similar name for this area in the field of theatrical studies, archeology has provided some support for it. In a recent trip to Greece, I found out that Apollo's temple in Delphi was divided into three distinct areas, namely the *pródōmos*, the *mégaron*, and the *opisthódōmos*. The latter referred to the place from where Apollo's priestess, Pythia, uttered her prophecies, which were received by the priest and then transmitted to the "consultant", who would be in the *mégaron* (Cf. Roux, 1976:91-101).

¹¹ The back/fore opposition in which I set the Greek stage thus avoids the outside/inside dichotomy which informs Padel's study (1992), which I find problematic insofar as such an antinomy resonates modern concerns, in particular vis-à-vis the analogy she establishes between the stage and the "self", which is immersed in a psychological frame. She claims, for example, that "this is the theater exulting in possibilities of relating inside to outside,

As the analysis in the following chapters will corroborate, the *opísō-skēnion* can be characterised as the place of impossible and prohibited actions, as the space which shelters the *unrealisable* (in both senses of the word), whereas the proscenium stages the possible and necessary actions (*Poetics*, 1451a 39; p.35). This binary opposition is instituted by the skene, which thus can be regarded as the line that bars the seen from the unseen, and inscribes a split onto the Greek stage. The reasons for and consequences of this barring are at the fulcrum of the present investigation.

The tripartite division of the Greek stage I have argued for so far¹² can be further expanded by means of a heuristic analogy with the Lacanian notion of the subject. As indicated in Part I, the subject is conceptualised as $\$$, i.e., as constituted by the split between the conscious and

unseen to seen, private inner experience to external watching and guessing of others: a concrete parallel to tragedy's personal dimension. All over tragedy, men and women suffer within, in their emotions" (1992:337). Such psychologism, I think, is remote from the Greek tragic mind.

¹² Barthes's study on Racine (1963) also relies on a triadic topography of the tragic scene. He identifies three different types of *loci* in Racine's tragedies: the Chamber, as the place of the invisible and the silent (pp.15-16); the Anti-Chamber, or "the scene properly speaking", or "the space of language" (p.16); and the "Outside" ("*l'Extérieur*"), which he sees as "the tabooed space" (p.18). Barthes's Chamber and Outside conflate in my *opísō-skēnion*, and his Anti-Chamber is analogous to my reading of the proscenium. As for the skene, he sees the door as performing a similar function: "between the Chamber and the Anti-Chamber, there is a tragic object ... the Door" (p.16). "...To transpose it is both a temptation and a transgression..." (p.17).

unconscious levels of psychic life, effected by her/his entry into language, metaphorically expressed in terms of the interpellation carried out by the Name-of-the-Father. In an analogous manner, I propose to read the Greek stage as divided between the *opísō-skēnion* and the proscenium, a division promulgated by the symbolic imperative of representation, for which the skene stands as an emblematic metaphor. That is to say that the skene can be seen as performing a similar function to the Lacanian bar, and in particular to the *NP*, in that it divides the stage between background and foreground and, moreover, mediates the interplay of these registers.

My reading is also informed by the psychoanalytic aim of producing an obverse reading, or, as Freud declared in *Totem an Taboo*, of investigating "the unconscious portion of the individual mind" (1913:26). This means that my analysis will privilege the actions that happen in the unconscious background of the skene, and will explore their interactions with the proscenium.¹³

I have suggested above that the *opísō-skēnion* is a forbidden place for audiences because it shelters actions which have been barred from the proscenium. In order to understand the nature of this (theatrical) interdiction, it is necessary to break through the metonymic process of

¹³ My analogy between the unconscious and the backstage is also supported by Freud's frequent metaphorical allusions to the former as "the other scene" (e.g., 1900a:536).

transference that ascribes to the entire *opísō-skēnion* the attributes of the actions it contains, and to examine the mechanisms through which these things are constituted as "prohibited". This quality can be extricated in poetic and psychoanalytical terms.

Aristotle writes in the *Poetics* that the poet should select the events to be staged according to "the law of probability and necessity" (1451a 39; p.35). Even though the Greek text does not mention "law", Butcher's translation seems appropriate in that "probability and necessity" function as a law presiding over the selection of events, as its reiteration in the following section attests (1451b 24; p.41). The word Aristotle uses in both cases is the preposition *katá*, which, governing the accusative, indicates a relation. In relation to what should the probable and the necessary be ascertained? The theatrical criterion of what is technically and aesthetically realisable on the stage can be brought up to account in part for the limits of the probable and the necessary. But as I have indicated before, technical qualities, though relevant, cannot thoroughly explain the *opísō-skēnion* as constituted in terms of unrealisable actions. Psychoanalysis converges to this explanatory aim.

First of all it reinforces the metonymic link between these forbidden actions and the unconscious *opísō-skēnion*. According to Lacan's definition, "what truly belongs to the

order of the unconscious, is that it is neither being, nor non-being, but the unrealised" (1981b:30). Freud helps extricate this link when he establishes that "...prohibitions... are necessary because certain persons or things are charged with a dangerous power, which can be transferred through contact with them, like an infection" (1913:21). This observation makes clear one of the first mechanisms which lie behind prohibitions: the forbidden is invested ("charged") with the power to disturb the well-being of others. A similar process of investment is present in the interdiction of the *opísō-skēnion*, and is put in relief by etymology. If we use the mediation of the Latin *obscenus*, we can see the *opísō-skēnion* as the etymo, in many modern languages, of the adjective "obscene", defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as something "offensively or repulsively indecent, esp. by offending accepted sexual morality". According to this definition, the obscene is endowed with the power to offend the moral well-being of a certain group, that is, to destabilise certain codes or norms of social behaviour. And once this power has been identified (or granted), it has to be "repulsed" or repressed. The conjunction of psychoanalytic and etymological perspectives thus makes the *opísō-skēnion* (henceforth ob-scene) visible in terms of the place constituted by actions which, due to their threatening qualities, among which is obscene, have to be kept back,

repressed, behind the scene. Furthermore, this conjunction also helps clarify the Aristotelian "law of probability and necessity" that presides over the selection of events that are entitled to cross over the skene into the proscenium, whereas others are repressed in the ob-scene.

The identification of the predicates attributed to certain actions, however, is not enough to foster an understanding of the splitting of tragic actions in terms of the ob-scene and the proscenium. Such clear-cut bipartition of the tragic stage has to be mitigated in face of two technical devices: the door of the skene and the *ekkyklēma*, or rolling platform, both of which denote that certain actions, or parts of them, do cross over/through the skene.¹⁴ This "leakage" is corroborated by the psychoanalytic tenet that the repressed always returns, as Freud announced,¹⁵ and Lacan echoed in terms of "*ça parle*" (1966:413). My analysis of the *Oresteia* thus will aim at interrogating the nature of the "on" and "off" actions in

¹⁴ There are profuse disputes concerning the number of doors of the skene and the approximate date of the introduction of the *ekkyklēma* (e.g., Pickard-Cambridge, 1946; Taplin, 1977; Simon, 1982; and Padel, 1992). For the purposes of the present introduction, it suffices to have ascertained the existence of either of these devices, which would thus offer a theatrical support for my claim concerning the metaphoric "leakage" of actions from the ob-scene to the proscenium.

¹⁵ This notion is reiterated throughout Freud's work. In *Jensen's Gradiva*, for example, he writes: "the symptoms on account of which the treatment has been undertaken are nothing other than precipitates of earlier struggles connected with repression or the return of the repressed..." (1907:90).

order to identify how the tragic "ça" speaks and what it says.

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CHAPTER III - "ACTIONS THAT MEN [CANNOT] PLAY":
PRIMORDIAL KILLINGS

*Não terás os carros dos triunfadores
Nem choros de escravos
.....
Estacará diante de ti
A máscara da negação
.....
E ficará o eco de tua queda*

Oswald de Andrade (Epitáfio No. 2)¹

Introduction

Like an ordinary theatre-goer who falls prey of the attraction for what is barred from her/his field of (theatrical) vision, I would like to begin this discussion by speculating what happens behind the Greek skene, with the mixed purpose of, while peeping into the forbidden, getting some insight, first of all, into the nature of the ob-scene actions, and secondly of their relation with the proscenium. A superficial look through the relatively small repertoire of Classical theatre gives an obvious catalogue of what happens on the other side of the skene: murders (sometimes also

¹ "You shall not have the carts of the victorious/Nor the wailing of the slaves/The mask of denial/ Will be stuck before you/And the echo of your fall shall remain", is a rough translation of these lines by one of the founders of the Modernist movement of Brazilian literature.

called sacrifices), suicides, adulteries, incest, treason, abduction, wars... Events which form the core of the tragic fabula (Else, 1957). I would like to focus on one of these events, which has multiple resonances in the tragic paradigm in particular, and in Greek literature in general. This event is the Trojan war, as depicted by Aeschylus in the *Agamemnon*, the first play of the only surviving trilogy to have reached us - the *Oresteia* (458 B.C.).

Aeschylus's trilogy assigns a salient position to the Trojan war. In a causal perspective of analysis of the story², it can be considered as the event which triggers the other major events dramatised in the trilogy. This seminal position is clearly perceived in a schematic synthesis of the *Oresteia*'s major events: the Trojan war ==> Iphigenia's sacrifice ==> Clytemnestra's killing of Agamemnon ==> Orestes's return ==> Clytemnestra's murder by Orestes ==> Orestes's trial and acquittal. Bearing in mind Aristotle's recommendation that events should be selected according to the laws of probability and necessity (1451a 39), Aeschylus's choice of situating the Trojan war in the ob-scene deserves investigation.³

² Story is used here in consonance with Bal's definition of the concept as "the result of an ordering" (1985:49).

³ The argument that placing capital events, such as this, off-stage is a dramatic strategy which has been frequently deployed by playwrights in general, even though worth mentioning, does not address the choice of leaving causal events in the ob-scene.

I wrote before that the repression of something does not entail its abolition. In this sense, the placing of an event in the backstage does not mean its complete exclusion from the proscenium. "Off" events leak and find their own awry means of expression. As equally indicated, the skene is not an impenetrable wall which pulls apart its two opposing sides; it has entrances and exits, as Taplin's extensive study shows (1977). In effect, the Trojan war enters the *Oresteia* at the very opening of the trilogy: in the watchman's account of the current state of affairs in Argos.

Like a spectator, the watchman occupies a "seeing-place" in relation to the setting of the play: "... couchant upon the palace roof of the Atreidae..." (1952:7; 3).⁴ Scholars (e.g., Taplin, 1977; Simon, 1982) seem to concur with the idea that the watchman delivers this speech from the top of the skene, and in effect treat it as textual evidence of the presence of the skene: "when we talk of the *skēnē* in tragedy, we are talking, probably, of the *Oresteia*..." (Padel, 1992:342). This positioning, together with the fact that the character is individualised only in terms of its function, i.e. to watch, make the watchman a focalizer *par excellence*. According to Bal's understanding

⁴ References to the *Oresteia* are taken from various commented editions and translations, each of which will be indicated by the year of publication provided within brackets after each quote, followed by the page number (in the case of English translations) and by the line number of the Greek text.

of this narratological agency, the focalizer "selects the actions and chooses the angle from which to present them, [and] with those actions [s/he] produces the narrative" (1991:88). As this process of seeing and making others see influences the apprehension of the actions, and of the narrative as a whole, (Bal, 1991:87), a closer look at what the watchman sees is in order.

The Ob-scene Prologue of the Watchman

In a back and forth movement from the particular to the general, the watchman opens the trilogy by making visible his imprisoned state and, moreover, his desire to be released from it. "Release from this weary task of mine has been my cry onto the gods throughout my long year's watch..." (1952:7; 1-2). Why is so privileged a task, such as the one of seeing everything, depicted as a tiresome, enslaving activity? Certainly not because it has given him the knowledge to interpret "the conclave of the stars" (1952:7; 4). Such a heuristic ability to grasp the "clear and absolute controllers of a pattern of time", as Goldhill puts it (1984:8), should be a source of empowerment, not of subjugation. The apparent paradox is undone when the watchman lowers his eyes and focusses on the Atridae's house: "... I bewail the fortunes of this house, not ordered for the best as in days ago" (1952:7; 18-9). Undermining

his mastery over the stars' sign-system is his vision of the degenerating state of the house and his powerlessness to intervene in it. In between the stars and the house, between order and disorder, the watchman's sight introduces the Trojan war:

So now I am still awatch for the signal-flame, the gleaming fire that is to harbinger news from Troy and tidings of its capture. (1952:7; 8-10)

Both his focus on such a vast event as this and its insertion at the beginning of the narrative are worth considering. From his angle of vision, the only aspect of the war which deserves to (or should) be seen is its successful ending, i.e. the victory of the Argives over the Trojans, and not, for example, the fierceness of Agamemnon's dispute with Achilles, as extensively narrated in the *Iliad*. Besides highlighting the belligerent valour of his countrymen, the focalisation on this episode makes the victory over Troy the most relevant aspect of the entire war. It shows that what matters to the watchman -- and to the *Oresteia* -- is the end of the war and, moreover, its immediate implication: Agamemnon's return to Argos. The placing of this new focalised element between order and disorder is also significant: Agamemnon's return is brought up as the mediating agency between the two conflicting aspects - stars/house - that inform the watchman's position.

Besides its construction as the resolution of a contradictory state of affairs, this focalised aspect of the

Trojan war also enables the expression of the watchman's demand:

... Tonight may there come happy release from my weary task! May the fire with its glad tidings flash through the gloom!" (1952:7&9; 20-1)

The end of the war is most wanted inasmuch as it will mean the watchman's release, a wish which in fact inaugurates the trilogy, as indicated in the play's opening lines quoted above. These two modes of focalising the war, i.e. as a mediator of contradictions and as the means to achieve an aim, provide an initial basis for the elaboration of a "permissive hypothesis" to be investigated in the course of my analysis of ob-scene events: the war is constituted as a signifier for the articulation of desire. In the watchman's introductory narrative, this signifier is at one level related to the watchman's desire for Agamemnon's return, i.e. for the return of order to the palace and to Argos, and for his release.

But desire, as psychoanalysis reminds us is not so easily rendered. In his reading of Freud's study of the dream of a hysteric, Lacan expounds that there are different registers of desire, that is, that one particular desire can actually be in the place of another "of quite a different order" (1966:621; 1977:257). This differentiation in the orders of desire can be understood in terms of a distinction between preconscious desires, which have access to conscious discourse, and "the desire for an unsatisfied desire"

(1966:621; 1977:258), which is of an unconscious, "uncanny" nature.⁵ Such understanding of desire throws problematic lights onto the watchman's prologue.

In his discourse, the signifier of the war carries quite straightforwardly the subject's desire for Agamemnon's return and, with it, his much-wanted release. In this sense, the watchman's desire and its signifier - the war - are harmonised on the conscious level of his statement. And, I would argue, it is precisely their insertion in the conscious level which enables the watchman to decode, with no hesitation, the sign-system through which the news from Troy is beamed to Argos.

All hail, thou blaze that showest forth in the
night a light as it were of day, thou harbinger of
many a choral dance in Argos in thanksgiving for
this glad event! (1952:9; 22-4)

The proficiency the watchman displays in translating this piece of news from signal into verbal language is yet another instance of his previously exhibited skills to interpret signs: "... I have learned to know aright the conclave of the stars of night" (1952:7; 4). In the act of translating one system into the other, the watchman's discourse performs another powerful heuristic task, that is, of transposing an ob-scene event into the proscenium. Through his speech the war crosses the skene and becomes part of the dramatic

⁵ This particular form of the return of the repressed -- the uncanny -- is defined by Freud as "that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar" (1919h:220).

narrative. Bearing in mind the problematics entailed by this trespassing, as previously sketched out, the dexterity with which it is effected is significant. It corroborates the argument that the signifier of the war brings to the fore the more obvious, conscious desires held by the watchman. Albeit situated in the ob-scene, this signifier, as articulated in a conscious discourse, does not bring to light the uncanny dimension of the "desire for desire". For this reason the watchman can so swiftly grasp the torch from Troy and render it over to the other characters and to the spectators. By acting thus, the watchman becomes a mediator between the other characters of the trilogy and the spectators, and between the "on" and "off" levels of the dramatic discourse, a mediation supported by his position on top of the skene. Construed as a prologue, he can but barely introduce (i.e mediate) matters and briefly point to some of the doors which separate the ob-scene from the proscenium. In this sense, his discourse has to be listened to in terms of the ambivalence in which it is immersed: it shows and hides, it gives and takes back. In other words, his consciously expressed desire has to be taken symptomatically, i.e. as taking the place of "quite a different order" of desire.

In the watchman's opening speech there seems to be certain gaps between what is said and what is suggested. Even though he says a lot and provides a substantial amount

of information, his discourse nevertheless falters and stops short at important moments. The most distinctive instance of this hesitation can be found in his reading of the "signal-flame" (1952:7), of the "*symbolon*" (8) from Troy. As argued before, the immediacy with which this symbol is decodified, particularly when contrasted with Clytemnestra's long and carefully articulated interpretation of it (1952:25-33; 204-350), is indicative of its connection with the more accessible level of consciousness. However, this hastiness overlooks important information and interpretative procedures, and thus creates the demand for a more satisfactory exegetical account of the coded message, as the one provided by Clytemnestra. In effect, the watchman's hasty deliverance is grounded on a denial to proceed any further in the matter: "... of my own choice I have words for such as know, and to those who know not I've lost my memory" (1952:9; 38-9).

This deliberate refusal to address the conditions and implications of Agamemnon's return from Troy can be read, within a psychoanalytical frame of reference, in terms of a psychic strategy which aims at barring from the conscious discourse of the proscenium all threatening elements which can come from the unrealisable ob-scene. The end result of the process of interdiction is not the elimination of the menacing desire, but its repression. Hence the resonant silence with which the watchman closes his speech: "...a

great ox stands upon my tongue" (1952:9; 36-7). Opposing the urge to speak is its paralysing counter-part: repression, whose presence is sharply indicated in the proverbial form. But the proverb does more than mark the repressive operation. Being, as etymology evinces, the discourse of the other, the watchman's proverb gives vent to the discourse of the Other, thus enhancing the asymmetrical relationship between signifier and signified.⁶ In the gap produced by this asymmetry desire is inscribed. As Lacan has observed, "desire is that which is manifested in the interval that demands hollows within itself, in as much as the subject, in articulating the signifying chain, brings to light the want-to-be [*"le manque à être"*]" (1966:627; 1977:263). In this sense, then, the threatening tone which hovers over the watchman's discourse can be read in a light different from the more easily perceptible ones, such as H.D.F. Kitto's, which view Clytemnestra as the commanding, repressive, i.e. castrating, agency.⁷ I would argue that another censoring

⁶ In his conceptualisation of the signifier, Lacan posits proverbs as a privileged instance of the signifying process, inasmuch as they undermine a strictly linguistic understanding of the signifier as a phonemic support for the signified. As he reminds, "... *le signifiant est d'abord ce qui a effet de signifié, et il importe de ne pas élider qu'entre les deux, il y a quelque chose de barré à franchir*" (1975:22). In the watchman's prologue, this "barred something" to be transposed is the skene.

⁷ Kitto describes Clytemnestra, in what is one of the most influential readings of Greek tragedy until today -- *Greek Tragedy: A Literary Study* -- in the following terms:

She is false; we knew that. She is determined; we knew that. What we did not know is that she is a woman of intellect and intellectual courage. She ventures a long speech full of lies,

agent is in operation here, one which can be analogically understood in terms of the collective interest which ascribes to the adjective "obscene" its menacing status.

On the verge of saying the unsayable, the watchman chooses oblivion and leaves the proscenium and the audience, after having not only interpellated the latter as spectators but, more importantly, directed their eyes to the issues he focalises. Having reached his own discursive limits, the watchman yields the stage to another type of character who occupies a similar mediatory and ambivalent position in Greek tragic narratives - the chorus.

The Ob-scene Discourse of the Chorus

Formed by twelve elderly Argive citizens,⁸ the chorus in the *Agamemnon* makes its entrance by filling in the gap left by the watchman's nervous "forgetfulness". They expound in great detail the events which motivated the war,

leading up to the affair of the purple carpet. Plain revenge with sword is not enough" (1954:69-70), where the phallic signifiers he uses to depict the character speak for themselves... (There are two annoyingly different versions of Kitto's *Greek Tragedy* in circulation: a more complete one, the third edition of the 1939 original (1970), and another "simplified" version (1954), based on the revisions of the second edition, from which most of my references have been suppressed. Quotes from either are differentiated by the year of publication.)

⁸ Even though the number of chorus members is another controversial issue among classicists, the chorus of the *Agamemnon* as composed of twelve members seems to strike a concordant note (Simon, 1982; Goldhill, 1992).

intercalating their exposition with some reflexive commentary on the greatness of Zeus (i.e. the hymn to Zeus, 1952:19; 160-183), as well as making reproachful observations on the enterprise of the war, fought "for the sake of a woman of many a lord" (1952:11; 62-3). In this respect, their entering ode, i.e. the *párodos*, should not be regarded as a rhetorical piece which merely aims at situating the audience in the mythic path the play is about to follow. Similarly to the prologue, the *párodos* does a lot more than usher the audience into the main action. As Kitto argues, "it lays down, as firmly as can be, the intellectual foundations of the whole trilogy" (1970:67). Given the fact that one of the purposes of my inquiry is the constitution of ob-scene events, emblematically condensed into the Trojan war, I will focus the investigation on the ways these "intellectual founders" of the *Oresteia* receive, and respond to, this chain of signifiers which is the Trojan war. Such an analytical option will lead me to concentrate the analysis of the chorus mainly after they "have laid down the foundations" of the trilogy, i.e. after the *párodos*.

In spite of the similar mediating or interpretative positions held by the chorus and the watchman, the former is not a receiver of the coded message from Troy. Rather, this group of elderly citizens receives the news already unpacked by Clytemnestra and, subsequently, the herald. Halfway through the *párodos*, however, the chorus interrupts the

narration of past events, disturbed by signs they cannot interpret: "now here, now there, the flames rise high as heaven, yielding to the soft and guileless persuasion of hallowed unguent, even the sacrificial oil brought from the inner chambers of the palace" (1952:13; 92-96). Puzzled by the celebratory rites they behold, the chorus invokes Clytemnestra to provide them with a clue to these happenings: "... Queen Clytemnestra, what has befallen? ... On what intelligence and convinced by what report is it that thou sendst about thy messengers to enjoin sacrifice?" (1952:13; 84-87). If we bear in mind that these are elderly citizens of Argos and, as such, should know the civic-religious practices of their *polis*, their incapacity to interpret the offerings as signs of "good tidings" is, a *minima*, intriguing.⁹ It can be counter-argued, however, that this bewildered uncertainty reveals prudence on the part of the chorus who, contrarily to the watchman, does not leap into first sight cues and, from them, draws its conclusions. In addition to that, the fact that the chorus appeals to Clytemnestra's interpretative assistance is an effective dramatic means of characterising the latter, as Kitto has suggested (1970:74). Both arguments, nonetheless, do not seem sufficient to account for such a lengthy and

⁹ In *Form and Meaning in Drama*, Kitto evokes a Greek saying which supports the estrangement the chorus's ignorance can provoke: "the young act, the older advise" ("*erga neon boulai de geronton*") (1960:33). The common assumption of the "sage elder" implicit in this saying is curiously contradicted by the chorus's reaction.

carefully articulated doubtful response.

The chorus's ambivalence acquires more precise contours when Clytemnestra, answering to their previous request, comes to the proscenium to announce the news of Agamemnon's victory. "Thou shalt hear joyful news surpassing all thy hopes - the Argives have taken Priam's town!" (1952:25; 266-67). The initial incredulity the chorus shows when hearing the piece of news for which they had been waiting for so long is taken to a paroxysmal level in the course of this dialogue with Clytemnestra, in spite of a momentary "suspension of disbelief" (1952:25; 270). The Queen's intricate explanation of how she arrived at this particular interpretation of the beacon-signs (1952:29-31; 281-316) does not manage to curb the chorus's disbelief: "But I would fain hear at large thy tale, so thou wouldst tell it yet again" (1952:31; 318-9). Like a child who is continuously drawn to a tale it abhors, i.e., to the uncanny, the chorus begs for more evidence. This ambivalence, especially in the face of their previous acknowledgement of Clytemnestra's mastery over the interpretation of symbols, should be met with an equivalent critical reserve.

In effect, the chorus's doubtful response to the much granted fact of Agamemnon's victory has been a contending issue to parts of the critical tradition on the *Oresteia* (Goldhill, 1984). Replying to the critique formulated by Page on Aeschylus's inability to compose choral odes, which

the former finds manifested in the chorus's inconsistent behaviour, Kitto argues that the dispute over the accuracy of Clytemnestra's information takes place among isolated members of the chorus, and not inside the ensemble. "... Three individuals detached from the chorus are a very different dramatic *persona* from the united body", he claims (1970:73). Both critics, despite making plausible interpretative points, seem to me to overlook other fruitful approaches to this question.

An immediately accessible source of explanation for the chorus's swaying attitude can be found in their own words: "'Tis like a woman's eager nature to yield assent to pleasing news ere yet the truth be clear" (1952:41; 483-84). Since the news comes from a woman, it is not worthy of credit. This is not the first, nor the last time that gender is brought up in the play as a means of accounting for different sorts of phenomena.¹⁰ The disarray which has overtaken the Atridae's house, for example, is explained by the watchman in terms of the gender of its administrator: "... thus rules my Queen, woman in sanguine heart and man in strength of purpose" (1952:7; 10-11). Given the low status females have in the trilogy and in Greek social life (Goldhill, 1986; Loraux, 1987), the chorus's skepticism

¹⁰ Goldhill's thorough reading of the trilogy (1984), for example, fundamentally argues for the structural role played by sexual difference in the tragic conflict and thus makes frequent recourse to gender biases as an explanatory motive (Cf. especially pp.39-42).

should not strike an inconsistent note. As I hope to demonstrate, cultural readings of sexual difference play a structural role in the symbolic organisation of the *Oresteia* in particular, and of Greek tragic discourse in general. The chorus hesitates about jumping into happy conclusions because this obscure piece of news is brought to light from the ob-scene via a woman who, in spite of her royal status, is nevertheless a woman and, as such, has an "overcredulous" mind, with "boundaries open to quick encroachment" (1952:43; 485-6). But, more important than the pinpointing of this millennial and tragic attribute is the examination of its weaving in the narrative fabric. Exposing its manufacturing can be a productive means to undermine its foundations.

Psychoanalysis has taught us that the easy rendering of structural issues - such as the one of gender just discussed - should be taken suspiciously or, better, symptomatically. "In the Freudian era", corroborates Bal, "it is almost compulsory to read discourse symptomatically" (1991:57). Thus, I shall temporarily leave aside Clytemnestra's gender, on the grounds of its being too unproblematic a source of explanation the chorus makes available to us, and shall close my focus on their ambivalent reception of the news from Troy. Rather than judge this reception in terms of Aeschylus's dramatic techniques, I would like to interrogate the chorus's reaction in terms of the discursive symptoms

they present.

Like the watchman, the chorus yearns for the end of the war and its implication - Agamemnon's return.

Of these matters tell us what you can and may, and become the healer of this anxiety. Now it carries thoughts of ill, and now from the sacrifices you reveal springs hope that gives protection, so that worry insufferable [cannot grieve my heart].

(1970a:21; 97-103)

Similarly to the watchman's discourse, the war stands as a signifier in the chorus's plea, a signifier which, in its metonymic chaining with others, enables the articulation of desire.¹¹ The chorus is here pleading for a relief of their heavy sorrows, that is, news of Agamemnon's victory. When relief arrives, it not only inspires profound doubts but, moreover, causes the chorus's fragmentation as a body and the fractured responses Kitto identified above in terms of individual replies. This fragmentation, rather than a technical problem, can be seen as a coherent outcome of the process of bringing into light the veiled ob-scene event of the war. In this sense, the recurring imagery of light/darkness, which most critics identify as characterising the *Oresteia*'s symbolic field (e.g. Lloyd-Jones, 1983; Lebeck, 1983; and Goldhill, 1984 & 1986), finds in this instance one of its most powerful constructions. Agamemnon's return from the war is the light which will glow in Argos's pitch dark skies. But this signifier does much more than that: it

¹¹ As Lacan postulated, "desire is a metonymy, however funny people may find the idea" (1966:528; 1977:175).

illuminates other dark ob-scene areas of the chorus and of the whole trilogy. That is one of the possible reasons for the allocation of this signifier in the forbidden "off" space. And since repression does not imply suppression, the two discursive situations examined so far can be seen as instances through which the ob-scene leaks into the proscenium and creates the tension which permeates these moments.

The inflated signifier of the Trojan war reveals, first of all, the chorus's ambivalence: at the same time that they want Agamemnon back they deny all data which indicate so. What makes the chorus reject the object of their desire, as if they were denying the forbidden fruit? Clytemnestra's interpretative agency, as constructed in the text, is too feeble an explanation for a phenomenon which involves denial and repression.

Freud has observed that "... prohibitions must have concerned activities towards which there was a strong inclination" (1913:31). In this sense, Agamemnon's return exposes a second, correlate aspect of the chorus's ob-scene side: a strong inclination or desire towards the object they deny. In their questioning of the Herald, for example, the chorus calls attention to the former's "yearning" (1952:47) ("erōs", 540) for the "fatherland" (1952:47; 540), as well as to their and the land's "longing" (1952:47) ("imérō", 544). Like in the hysteric's dream that Freud analyses and

Lacan discusses (1966:621; 1977:257), one desire seems to be substituting for another in the case of the chorus's longing.

Their somatic splitting can be taken as a hysterical symptom.¹² The signifier Agamemnon touches on fiercely forbidden, tabooed grounds, instituted precisely to repress a strong inclination, whose realisation could pose serious threats to those implicated in the event. Hence the necessary mechanisms - i.e. taboos - different social groups have had to devise in order to protect themselves against their individuals' rampant inclinations. These inclinations are metaphorically conceptualised in Freud around the disputable notion of totemism which is "like hysteria" (Lévi-Strauss, 1991:1), as indicated in the first part of this dissertation.

Freud writes in *Totem and Taboo* that "a totem is as a rule an animal ... and more rarely a plant or a natural phenomenon, ... which stands in a peculiar relation to the whole clan... The totem is the common ancestor of the clan; at the same time it is their guardian spirit and helper..." (1913:2). In establishing the connection between the totem and the taboo, Freud suggests that the function of the taboo is to protect the totem, an entity whose extraordinary status is granted on the grounds of a collective interest or

¹² The word in Greek for this fragmentation is *sparagmós*, which combines both the sense of dismemberment, of tearing apart, and a "convulsion" or "spasm", a characteristic of some hysterical fits.

investment (1913:104). More so than from ethnology, I would suggest that these notions are derived from Greek mythology, and in particular from the *Agamemnon*.

At the very ending of *Totem and Taboo* Freud brings both the tragic hero and the chorus from the background to the ethnological proscenium of his narrative, thus acknowledging a presence which until then had been kept invisible, but not silent. Even though Freud's postulations address the hero and chorus of the tragic discourse in general, I would argue that it is the chorus of the *Agamemnon* he has in mind when he states that:

in the remote reality it had actually been the members of the Chorus who caused the Hero's suffering; now, however, they exhausted themselves with sympathy and regret... The crime which was thrown on to [the hero's] shoulders... was precisely the crime for which the members of the Chorus, the company of brothers, were responsible. (1913:156)¹³

As regards the tragic hero, Freud is even more explicit about his debt to *Agamemnon*: "the Hero of tragedy... had to suffer because he was the primal father, the Hero of the great primaeval tragedy which was being re-enacted with a tendentious twist" (1913:156). If we name these general categories of the dramatic discourse, Freud's statement will read as: *Agamemnon* is the hero of the great primaeval tragedy which is re-enacted with a tendentious twist in his

¹³ Another possible inclusion here would be the chorus from *Oedipus Rex*. Its inclusion nonetheless would expand the narrow scope of Freud's apparently general formulation on the tragic chorus.

discourse. Indeed, Agamemnon stands in the *Oresteia* in an analogous relation to that of the totem towards the clan. Like the latter, he is depicted in the play as an extraordinary figure and guardian of his house and *polis* against all perils. "May the master of the house come home...", pleads the fragile, unprotected watchman (1952:9; 34-5). "... Our King, worthy of honour beyond all living men...", praises the Herald (1952:45; 530-1). The chorus welcomes Agamemnon as the "... discerning shepherd of his flock..." (1952:67; 795-6). In a superlative (and deceitful) welcome to Agamemnon, Clytemnestra epitomises his position as the "... firm-based pillar of the lofty roof..." (1952:75; 897-8). Stretching the queen's architectural metaphor, Agamemnon can be seen as the structuring element which sustains the domestic and the political roof, the principle which prevents both domains from falling into disorder or chaos.¹⁴ As an extraordinary, all-mighty father and king, Agamemnon is constructed as the backbone of the organisation of social life in Argos.

Agamemnon's totemic position, however, still does not account for the chorus's hysterical reaction and their subsequent fragmentation (both facts constituting strong indices of the impact produced on the group by the news of the king's return). If the hypothesis I mentioned above --

¹⁴ As indicated in my analysis of the watchman's prologue, Agamemnon's return from the war is depicted as the mediatory agency between order and disorder.

i.e., that the *Oresteia* provides Freud with a major frame of reference for the conceptualisation of the totemic father -- is valid, then we can make recourse to Freud's connection between totem and taboo in order to clarify the chorus's reaction.

Two taboo prohibitions constitute the core of the totemic system: "not to kill the totem and not to have sexual relations with a woman of the same totem" (Freud, 1913:132). This connection spells out the nature of the chorus's "strong inclination" and the interdicting power which represses it. In the chorus's ob-scene lies their desire towards an action which is unrealisable (in both senses)¹⁵ in the proscenium: the killing of the totem-Agamemnon.¹⁶ This conflicting situation of desire and intense prohibition becomes in my view the source of the chorus's ambivalent reaction to the translation or transposition of the coded news from the obscure "off" to the illumined "on" stage. The light that glows in the proscenium is too bright to be descried, thus causing the splitting of its beholders, i.e. the fragmentation of the chorus as a body. Unable to bear the sight or guilt of their "obscene" desire, the chorus resorts to an inflicted self-

¹⁵ As Lacan's observation quoted before evinces, the unrealised is "what truly belongs to the order of the unconscious" (1981b:30).

¹⁶ "Psycho-analysis has revealed that the totem animal is in reality a substitute for the father...", corroborates Freud (1913:141).

punishment: the mutilation of their body.¹⁷

Two other instances in the play corroborate the fragmentation of the chorus as a result of the oblique exposure of their tabooed desire: first their scene with Cassandra and, secondly, Agamemnon's death. In the former, the chorus initially manages to identify the dangerous track Cassandra indicates and which they all are about to follow: "... she is on the trail where she will discover blood" (1952:93; 1094). However, as she goes further along this disturbing path, the chorus makes recourse to the splitting mechanism: they dismember their head from their body.

CASSANDRA

O God, what can it be she purposeth? What is this strange woe she purposeth here within, what monstrous, monstrous horror, beyond love's enduring, beyond all remedy? And help stands far away!

CHORUS

These prophesyings pass my comprehension; but those I understood - the whole city rings with them.

CASSANDRA

Ah, fell woman, so thou wilt do this deed? Thy husband, partner of thy bed, when thou has cheered him with the bath, wilt thou - how shall I tell the end? Aye, soon it will be done. Now this hand, now that, she stretches forth!

CHORUS

Not yet do I comprehend; for now, after riddles, I am bewildered by dark oracles. (1952:95; 1100-1113)

¹⁷ The similarities with Oedipus are obvious here. The latter, however, goes the whole hog in his violation of the two taboos - parricide and incest. In the *Oresteia* these "crimes" are performed and shared by a wider cast, as I will argue in the next chapter.

The curse which undermines Cassandra's "prophetic soul" could not find a better soil to manifest itself: the chorus's incomprehension of her allusions to the crime which is about to be committed. As when confronted with the first signs of Agamemnon's victory, the chorus reveals itself here as unable to step into the symbolic chain of meaning Cassandra is constructing. Given the latter's origin from the ob-scene Troy, the chorus's inability to understand her intensely metaphoric language can be metonymically read as part of another inability to contemplate the ob-scene deed - Agamemnon's murder - to which the Trojan prophetess is giving vent. Like the watchman, who chooses oblivion as his form of Oedipal blindness, the chorus chooses incomprehension, or the amputation of their sensorial and intellectual senses.

The dramatic encounter of the interpreter's discourse, which is not heeded, with the chorus's deafness echoes a pattern already displayed on the occasion of Clytemnestra's reading of the beacon-sign and the chorus's systematic disbelief of it. The reiteration of this pattern is important. As pointed out by Lévi-Strauss, repetition brings to light the structure of a mythic narrative (1963:229). What we see in both cases is an utterance devoid of communicative value on the grounds of the gender of its subject: being a(n) (unfaithful) woman turns Clytemnestra's words ineffectual. Having broken her vows to Apollo, i.e.

being an openly, (unbracketed) unfaithful woman, makes Cassandra's predictions unattainable. Hers and Clytemnestra's abortive dialogue (1952:87&89; 1035-1068) constitutes a remarkable piece of evidence of the boundaries which, at the same time that approximate both characters, render their interaction impossible.¹⁸ In this sense, gender emerges as a structural feature in the play's narrative fabric. Not only does it have an explanatory value, but it also presides over intersubjective relations, allocating specific positions to each en-gendered subject.

The chorus's mutilated deafness, as expounded so far, can be read as an over-determined ¹⁹ form of castration, performed, first of all as a punitive reaction to their tabooed desire to kill the totemic father. Secondly, castration comes about as the result of the chorus's interaction with female subjects, in which the latter are made to devour all the interpretative power they could have. Rendered so incompetent, the chorus cannot but doubt Clytemnestra's reading and neglect Cassandra's prophetic warnings. Both cases constitute a disavowal of the female agency, which can be read as a perverse and retaliatory form of expression of the chorus's impotence. As Kaja Silverman

¹⁸ It should be underlined, though, that Clytemnestra's configuration is coloured by other contradictory hues which will be subsequently discussed.

¹⁹ The notion of overdetermination echoes Freud's definition of it as "having two or more simultaneous determinants" (1913:100).

has observed, "the male subject protects himself [against castration] through disavowal..." (1992:46).

Having become thus impotent, it is not surprising nor inconsistent to see the chorus act as a completely shattered body during Agamemnon's murder (1952:121&123; 1346-71). Kitto, even though following a different analytical perspective, acknowledges this situation in the following terms: "the shock [of Agamemnon's murder] splits the chorus into twelve dismayed individuals" (1970:76), or fragments, I should say. In this respect, it would not be strictly correct, from the dramatic point of view, to say that the chorus acts at all here, since what we see in this scene is their lack of action, grounded on an ulterior and more profound lack: the castration perpetrated by their ob-scene desire to kill the totem-Agamemnon and by their empowerment of Clytemnestra as a female subject.

However, it cannot be ignored that the actual murder takes place in a split situation: the chorus remains in the proscenium, while the deed is done in the ob-scene. This is a significant theatrical device inasmuch as it leaves in the ob-scene the forbidden actions which could not be realised in the proscenium. This division evinces an analogous one that Lacanian psychoanalysis puts forth in terms of the three registers that constitute subjectivity: the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary. The ob-scene harbours the impossible scenes that constitute the Real, whereas the

representable (and represented) actions of the proscenium inform the Symbolic. Because the Real is the place of the impossible, the unrealisable (Lacan, 1975/76:20), it resists being symbolised in the proscenium. But the Greek theatre suggests (and Lacan articulates) that there are links between these two registers, as I will attempt to demonstrate below.

Clytemnestra as Metaphor

Concurrently to the partition of the setting, there is also an important split in the scene of Agamemnon's murder between the desiring subject and the doer - the chorus and Clytemnestra, respectively.²⁰ While the former is depicted in the ambivalent position of desire and denial, the latter is invested with the power to resolve this contradiction and carry the desire to its full realisation. In this sense, Clytemnestra becomes an instrument of, a metaphor for the chorus's unconscious desire, a role which starts to be constructed as early as the beginning of the play.

In the watchman's opening speech, he describes Clytemnestra as "*gynaikòs andróboulon elpídzon kéar*" (11), rendered by the Loeb translator as "woman in sanguine heart

²⁰ It should be noted that Aegisthus's participation in the murder is too peripheral in Aeschylus's construction of the whole event. This peripheric treatment would allow us to cast the character as a silent member of the "murderous" chorus.

and man in strength of purpose" (1952:7). The Brazilian classicist Mário da Gama Kury provides a more concise version of this line: "a woman of virile disposition ... persistent in hope",²¹ a translation which resembles the one given by Richard Lattimore as "a lady's male strength of heart in its high confidence" (1960:35). Hugh Lloyd-Jones renders it as "a woman's man-counseling, ever hopeful, heart" (1970a:16). The most influential commentators of the *Agamemnon* give similar variants to this line. Eduard Fraenkel reads it as "a woman's heart of manly counsel" (1962, vol.II:10). Denniston-Page, in turn, present it as "a woman's manly-purposed heart expectant" (1968:68).

The diversity of translations (interpretations) is a common place fact as regards the domain of classical literature, but one which becomes particularly relevant in this case, inasmuch as it highlights the ambiguities which inform this Aeschylean line. Within this polysemy I would like to allow myself a quick speculative exercise on the different meanings the predicate "*andróboulon*" can acquire in translation. All the above quoted interpretations of this word have one thing in common - the fact that Clytemnestra, as a female subject, overflows the borders which circumscribe and define her as female. The male attributes she is depicted as possessing place the character in an

²¹ The Portuguese translation reads: "*mulher de ânimo viril... persistente na esperança*" (1991:19).

anomalous situation, thus enabling us to interrogate the nature of the very norm that informs her constitution as androgynous. As Loraux reminds us, "tragedy constantly disturbs the norm in the interest of the deviant, but at the same time we must be aware that under the deviant the norm is often silently present" (1987:30).

Fraenkel points out that "*andróboulon*" is a "rare word ... probably coined for this context by the poet" (1962, vol. II:10).²² Based on this hypothesis, I would like to break the compound and look more closely at one of its constitutive parts.

"*Boulon*", can be read as the accusative form of *boulē* which, according to Liddell & Scott (1994), is a derivative of the verb *boulomai*, translated by them as "to will, wish, be willing". In this sense, Clytemnestra can be regarded as possessing wishes (*bouloi*) which have a uniquely male (*andros*) nature. However, it should be noted that the verb *boulomai* belongs to the middle voice, a voice which gives verbs a reflexive value, and, what is more relevant to my argument, shares the same paradigm with the passive voice.²³ Even though, grammatically speaking, this

²² The "rarity" of *andróboulos* is corroborated by Liddell and Scott's *Lexicon* (1994), which registers its use in only two sources: Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*, and in *Praeparatio Sophistica*, by the second-century A.D. grammarian Phrynichus.

²³ In this sense, the Greek middle voice can be read literally as mediating between the active and the passive voices. Its passive tones are more clearly rendered in Portuguese grammars of the Greek language (e.g., Freire, 1987), where the middle and the passive

dédoublement does not apply to the verb in question, the grammar of the text allows a reading of this adjective in terms of the dualism of the middle/passive voices: Clytemnestra can be seen, on the one hand, as willing things which are defined by the play as exclusively masculine; on the other, she can be viewed as being the agent of the passive of male wishes.²⁴ I would contend that in both the watchman and the chorus's treatment of the ob-scene event of the war, Clytemnestra's voice is markedly passive.²⁵ As far as the chorus is concerned, she is endowed by them with the power to, first of all, decode the sign and then carry into effect their hidden desire. This endowment is responsible for the scenic split which takes place during Agamemnon's murder between the subject of desire and the subject of the

voices are treated as one, the "*média-passiva*", or mid-passive voice.

²⁴ Goldhill's rigorously philological reading of the trilogy also calls attention to the "play on the active and passive senses" (1984:30) of two other adjectival forms: *teknópoínos* (155) (i.e., "vengeance for a child", 1952:17) and *gynaikopoínōn* (225) (or "to avenge a woman", 1952:23). As regards the adjective in question, Goldhill senses a problem, but does not pursue it: "the rare adjective *andróboulon* draws attention to the peculiarity of the situation, as indeed does the uncommon construction of *elpídzō* without an object: a generalised force of expectation/desire which leaves its object noticeably unspoken" (1984:9). As my counter-coherent reading attempts to show, this "unspoken" object is obliquely indicated.

²⁵ My privileging of Clytemnestra's "passive voice" does not cover all the complexities of the character, and leaves out all her "active voice" actions, which have been exhaustively examined by Aeschylean scholarship. Such an option for the passive is consistent with the counter-coherent reading of the *Oresteia* I have set out to perform.

deed. Clytemnestra becomes, then, the chorus's double or, as Kitto acutely observed, "Clytemnestra and the chorus play into each other's hands perfectly" (1954:74).²⁶ As a signifier which gives vent to their forbidden desire, it is only expected that the chorus will despise Clytemnestra as "an object of grievous hate to the citizens" (1970a:93; 1410-11), whilst revering "our most gracious guardian..." (1952:129; 1450-1).

In this respect she becomes for the chorus what the Greeks call *pharmakos*, i.e., the one "who plays the role of the scapegoat", as Gernet defines it (1981:161). For Girard, the scapegoat is the outcome of a mechanism of transference onto another (a victim) of the responsibility of a crime that utterly disturbs a given social order.²⁷ The choice of a scapegoat rests on the latter's position within the community: "the further one is from normal social status, the greater the risk of persecution", observes Girard

²⁶ It seems important to stress that Kitto's line of interpretation is profoundly different from the one I am pursuing here. Nonetheless, my conclusions come closer to his views than the ones held by more contemporary readers, as my frequent references to his studies indicate.

²⁷ The semantic field of bestiary in which the scapegoat is inserted is appropriate to the *Oresteia*'s universe. The chorus had previously characterised Iphigenia's struggle to free herself from the hands that would sacrifice her "as it were a kid" (p.23). The Greek word is significant: *chímaira* (232), which besides meaning a female goat, is also a proper name, the Chimaera, the fire-spitting monster which has the body of a goat, the head of a lion, and the tail of a serpent. As Vidal-Naquet acutely remarked, "the savagery of the victim [takes] over from the savagery of the act" (1988: 144).

(1992:18). Clytemnestra's "manly heart" ("*andróboulon kéar*") constitutes an anomaly not only to the grammar of the Greek language,²⁸ but also to her ethos and *éthnos*, a link that grounds Lacan's claim that "culture... could well be reduced to language" (1966:496; 1977:148).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Clytemnestra the scapegoat can be seen as a symptom of the chorus, a symptom which emerges in the metonymic process of articulation of their desire. As the metaphorical agent who carries out their "parricidal" desire, Clytemnestra performs an *acting out*, that is, the return of the repressed "in a scenario of great fidelity whose authorship the subject fails to recognise as his own" (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988:5). Unable to bear the burden of their criminal desire, the chorus transfers it to Clytemnestra, and thus avoids an overt breach of one of the rules of totemism - the killing of the father.

This metaphoric deviation has dialectical resonances. On the one hand, it conforms to the Aristotelian "law of probability and necessity" -- a theatrical correlate of the rule posed by the metaphoric "totemism" -- insofar as the criminal action is banned from the Symbolic order of representation. Nonetheless, the parricide/regicide is committed, in the ob-scene, by an equally ob-scene ("fiend",

²⁸ As Loraux reminds us, "the verbal rigor of Greek tragedy... twists language only for a very definite purpose, such as to upset the normal categories" (1987:13-14).

1952:131; "*daimon*", 1468) character. That is to say that on one level Aristotle's necessity -- *anánkē* (1451a 39) -- is observed. But the crime also responds to a divine level of *anánkē*: "Zeus is the author of all, worker of all"

(1952:133; 1485-86), the chorus has to admit. The first time this divine imperative is mentioned in the text is in relation to Agamemnon's acquiescence to Artemis's revengeful demand for Iphigenia's sacrifice. The chorus describes him as having put on "the harness of necessity"

("anánkas...lépadnon").²⁹ In order to emphasise the inevitability such notion carries in Greek, Denniston-Page insist on its translation as "compulsion" (1968:xxiv & 88).

This option evokes another disciplinary level on which *anánkē* figures with a similarly divine quality:

psychoanalysis. In *Leonardo da Vinci*, Freud quotes the Greek word and defines it as "the laws of nature" (1910c:125).

These "natural" laws are later reformulated and expounded in terms of the fundamental erotic and death drives.³⁰ In

²⁹ Denniston-Page's edition of the *Agamemnon* has the phrase in question in line 218, and in their commentary object to the translation of *lépadnon* as yoke (as rendered, for example, by both the Loeb translator [1952:21], and Lattimore [1960:41]), in that this word refers to "the strap which fastens the neck to the yoke" (1968:88).

³⁰ My approximation of Freud's postulations on the drives to the field of Greek thought finds support in his own writings. In "Analysis Terminable and Interminable", he acknowledges that his theory of "an instinct of death or aggression [which] claims equal rights as a partner of Eros as manifested in the libido" finds a parallel "in the writings of one of the greatest thinkers of ancient Greece... Empedocles of Acragas..., born about 495 B.C." (1937c:244-45).

Totem and Taboo these drives are alluded to as "love and hatred", and are placed at the root of the ambivalent attitude towards the totemic animal (1913:130). Agamemnon's murder responds to the libidinal *anánkē* of the chorus, who finds in Clytemnestra the perfect double to act out their aggressive drive. Tragic actions that a woman must play...

The passive inflection of Clytemnestra's characterisation begins to question the notorious interpretation of the *Oresteia* as dramatising the passage from matriarchy into patriarchy.³¹ As a metaphor for the chorus's *anánkē*, Clytemnestra hardly qualifies as a mother, let alone as one who exercises power. From an active voice point of view, her power is circumscribed to "managing" ("*diaponouménou*", 19) the house in the absence of its rightful master. According to the watchman's intricate series of parallelisms at the opening of the play, such action is as far removed from a desirable order, from the *kósmos* (i.e. from a structured world), as the house is from the "brilliant masters" ("*lamproùs dynástas*", 6) of the firmament. Indeed, "there is more between heaven and earth", as I will try to demonstrate in the following and subsequent discussions.

³¹ The bibliography on this issue is vast. Among the most notable proponents of the matriarchy/patriarchy interpretation, I underline Bachofen (1967), Engels (1941), and Freud (1913 & 1939a). From the point of view of feminist criticism and classical studies, Eva Cantarella (1985) is one of the most eloquent supporters of the idea.

"For Whom the Bell Tolls?"

The constitution of *anánkē* as a divine, natural, or even unconscious imperative entails another type of *anánkē*: an equally powerful force to curb or humanise the former. Within the terms of reference of Greek theatre this force can be attributed to the skene. In the hermeneutical systems of poetics and psychoanalysis to which I have made recourse in this analysis, this force receives the names of "probability and necessity" and the Name-of-the-Father, respectively. It is in their name that the bells of *anánkē* are made to toll. In the play's vocabulary, this force is called Zeus; it is he who ultimately orders all sacrifices and killings, not only of the guilty, but also of the innocent like Iphigenia, Cassandra, and the women and children of Troy (Cohen, 1993). Under Zeus's *anánkē*, Agamemnon also becomes a scapegoat, a victim who is killed in the god's name.

This name is pronounced and evoked extensively through the entire trilogy. The chorus summarises its range when they are forced to admit that all deeds, including Agamemnon's murder, were "all through Zeus, cause and author of all things" (1968: 207) ("*diai Diós/ panaitíou panergéta*", 1485-86). The epithet sets us in one of the trilogy's most forceful debates, namely that on the cause, responsibility, and accountability or guilt (*aitía*) of all

deeds (*panergētēs*), which informs its construction of the notion of Justice (*Dikē*) (Cohen, 1993). Zeus as the Ultimate cause needs expansion: "he is the triumphant god who overthrew the god [Cronus] who had overthrown *his* predecessor [Uranus]; the god who established the law...; the god whose favours come through violence", is Kitto's sharp depiction (1970:70). Two fundamental characteristics are put in relief here: 1) he is the third in a genealogical line, a triad that is replicated in the two "most tragic" families (*Poetics*, 11453a 27-28) -- the Atridae (Atreus, Agamemnon, Orestes) and the Labdacidae (Labdacos, Laios, Oedipus); 2) as a third, Zeus nevertheless manages to establish himself as the primal cause, the law-giver, a status effected through a violent *coup d'état*. Zeus thus epitomises "not only a trigenerational structure, but intergenerational conflict", as Goldhill notices (1984:27).

If in the context of the trilogy "Zeus is... unmetaphorisable" (Goldhill, 1984:26), within my frame of interpretation he can be taken as a mythical equivalent of the paternal metaphor in psychoanalysis. It is under the name of this father that Agamemnon has to be murdered in order to become "Agamemnon", a surrogate of the Name-of-the-Father/Zeus. That is why the chorus, when confronted with Agamemnon's dead body, resorts to a ritual different from the offerings done by Clytemnestra: mourning, or as Freud puts it, "an unappeased longing for the father" (1913:149).

This ritual performs an important mediation (which will take up most of the next play) between Agamemnon and "Agamemnon", i.e., between the Real father who murders his child, and the Symbolic representative of the law. I have in mind the constitution of the pacifying ideal father of the Imaginary. "Oh king, my king/ how shall I weep for you?/ What can I say out of my heart of pity?" (1960:83; 1489-91).³²

Through this ritual the chorus regains the bondage which makes them a collective body. Their identity as a collectivity is woven by means of the constitution of Agamemnon as the ideal fatherly king. In order to underpin this process of idealisation, it would suffice to note the chorus's symptomatic change of attitude. At first they are highly critical of the whole enterprise of the war fought for the sake of an unfaithful (i.e. unworthy) woman (1952:11; 59-66). After Agamemnon's death, his memory goes through an ideological cleansing which removes all the blame from the Atreus king and places it on Helen: "o infatuate Helen, who didst of thyself alone work the destruction of these many lives, these lives exceeding many, beneath the walls of Troy" (1952:129; 1455-7). We see here a similar process of transference of male attributes to female subjects, which has already been noticed in regard to Clytemnestra and Cassandra. Only that in this particular

³² Clytemnestra's construction as a metaphor for the chorus's parricidal desire can be seen as the first requisite of this Imaginary mediation.

case the transference is not of empowering qualities, i.e. it is not a case of castration, but of its reverse: a transference of undesirable traits so that the object can emerge purified of all blames. Through this process, Agamemnon is divested of his (human) imperfections and thus can be risen by this collectivity to the summits of a paradigm, i.e. of an example to be followed.³³ As Slavoj Žizek has observed, "the dead father turns out to be stronger than the living one. After the parricide, the former reigns as the Name-of-the-Father, the agent of the symbolic law that irrevocably precludes access to the forbidden fruit of enjoyment" (1991:24).

The chorus in the *Agamemnon* begins to create the conditions of possibility for the institutionalisation of the Name-of-the-Father by means of the vicarious murder of the father, followed by his morbid idealisation. In the mournful construction of this ideal image not only are they purified of their guilt but also find a common figure in whose image they make themselves. This Real guilt and the specular identit(y)ification necessitate the mediation of a Third which can pose a limit to their overwhelming effects. Without this ultimate arbiter the chorus cannot find the words to speak: "how shall I speak?" ("τί ποτ' εἰπῶ;", 1491). The mythic vocabulary calls this arbiter Zeus.

³³ This process, important as it is, does not terminate in the *Agamemnon*, but is carried further in the two other plays of the trilogy: the *Choephoroi* and the *Eumenides*.

"Whoever he is" (160), he is "the one who has set mortals on the path to understanding" ("tòn phroneîn brotoûs hodō-/santa", 176-77). The chorus's ode to Zeus resonates through the trilogy; they sing/act so that this name can be affirmed. In this respect Kitto is precise when he states that the chorus "lays down the intellectual foundations of the whole trilogy" (1970:67).

Agamemnon figures as Zeus partner, another name of the Name. Clytemnestra uses a household metaphor to characterise this structural principle: "stýlon" (898), i.e., a pillar which sustains the whole symbolic edifice and thus "styles" its character. In this sense Kitto is once again sharp when he asserts that "this is not an intimate drama; it is architectural in scale" (1970:74). Indeed, as I hope to have demonstrated, the theatrical partition between the *opisō-skēnion* and the *pro-skēnion*, which is perpetrated by the *skēne*, is an intrinsic element of a project of socio-psychic architecture. The relationship between the "off" and "on" spaces is thus constructed so as to enable the subreptitious emergence of a tabooed desire and its subsequent realisation. In the deviation, as Loraux reminds us, the norm is reaffirmed (1987:30). Due to metonymic and metaphorical articulations, the ob-scene event of the Trojan war can gain access to the visible proscenium, thus promoting the articulation of other more ob-scene acts. Because it is constituted as a signifier, this event makes

possible the utterance of the Name-of-the-Father to its full-scale performance.

However, the Name-of-the-Father, as constructed in the *Agamemnon*, still leaves untouched its complete operation, i.e. the interdiction of the "fruit of enjoyment", as expressed by Žižek (1991:24), and the collective sanction of this law. Each of these processes are at the fulcrum of the other two plays of the trilogy - the *Libation Bearers* and the *Eumenides*, respectively, and will be analysed in the next two chapters. What remains to be discussed here is a second level of relations, i.e. the one between this theatrical architecture and the audience.

"They Toll for Thee"

I pointed out in the introductory section of this analysis that the place allocated to the audience in the Greek theatre was called *theatron*, i.e. the seeing-place. It was also underlined that the *skene*, with its front towards the audience, constituted a demarcating line circumscribing the scenic space and the spectators' field of vision. Given this design and the relations already examined between the back and the front sides of the stage, the *skene* can be envisaged as forming a special kind of mirror which, at the same time that it bars the spectators' eyes from the ob-scene, also filters its events and reflects them onto the *proscenium*.

And, once distilled, these events are rendered to the audience's gaze. Strictly speaking, what is offered to the audience's contemplation is the outcome of a refined process of representation, a particular form of sign.

Similarly to the beacon-sign which reaches Argos, the audience receives coded messages which have to be interpreted in order to become meaningful - a task which immediately erodes commonly-held assumptions of the passive role played by audiences during a performance. And, like the readings produced in the *Agamemnon*, this activity not only requires from the audience the deployment of sensorial and intellectual mechanisms, but also mobilises other, less palpable layers of their psychic and social experiences. These requirements for reading can be better understood if we bear in mind the constitution of the signs to be read.

The passage of events from the ob-scene to the proscenium is grounded on a symbolic split between signifier and signified, as demonstrated in the case of the Trojan war, which enables the articulation of other levels of signification, such as the unconscious one. But this possibility presupposes, contradictorily enough, a denial or, *a minima*, a disguise of any trait of uncanniness, of saying the unsayable, in order to integrate a signifying chain or discourse. These ambiguously constituted signs can be called *images*. According to W.J.T. Mitchell, "images are ... the sort of sign that presents a deceptive appearance of

naturalness and transparence concealing an opaque, distorting, arbitrary mechanism of representation, a process of ideological mystification" (1987:8). It is because the Trojan war is constituted as an image that it can bring to light the obscure layers of the psychic and the ideological forbidden. In this sense, it can be said that the skene projects onto the proscenium and to the audience images which are wrapped up in a kind of veil which, at the same time that it is transparent, especially having in mind the present-tense nature of theatrical performances, also covers up its ideological constructiveness.

From what has been said above, it can be inferred that images are not monolithic representations, but are constructed in a two-way, contradictory manner. It is precisely this feature which has enabled my reading, as a member of the audience, of the image of the Trojan war in terms of the lapses it contains and, thus, to explore its ideological drappings. Such a reading, however, gets more complex if we take into account the fact that the skene, while being a mirror which produces and projects images to the audience, is also a mirror held up to this audience, in which they can see their own images, merged with the others. In this amalgamation lies perhaps the source for the relationship which, since Aristotle, has been described as distinctive of the tragic discourse - the identification of the audience with the situations and characters depicted on

stage.

In another influential theoretical treatise on tragedy, Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1956), this amalgamated relationship is called "Dionysian" and is characterised by the dissolution of the borders which contain and define being.

The implications of such a specular relation, rather than being a fierce process of ideological indoctrination, as argued by Augusto Boal (1979), can bring about contradictory insights. As a mirror, a *speculum*, the skene can be seen as a metaphoric agency which joins together the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic in the interplay between the ob-scene and the audience. This risky enterprise, as pointed out by Nietzsche (1956), is mitigated by the audience's position in the seeing-place, the *theatron*. Safeguarded in their voyeuristic place, the spectators can allow themselves to blend into the proscenium images and at the same time behold and explore their virtuality. And this act of facing the unknown, the obscure, can be a fruitful way of peeping through the ideological veil of images. In this sense, the Aristotelian "fear" or the Nietzschean "horror", experienced by the audience when confronted with the dreaded, repressed *spectrum* (ghost) given to them by the specular skene, can be seen as a necessary part of the reading process of the tragic discourse. It is because the spectators have contemplated

the forbidden - with all the fear or horror it may entail -
that its dissolution can be effected. It is because the
signifier of the Trojan war has been brought to the fore,
that an insight into the structural principle of the Name-
of-the-Father -- in its theatrical and mythical resonances -
- was made possible.

CHAPTER IV -

"ACTIONS THAT MEN [CANNOT] PLAY" II:
ORESTES'S FAMILY REPAST

*Narciso acha feio o que não é espelho.*¹

Caetano Veloso ("Sampa")

*Non recordarás este sueño porque tu
olvido es necesario para que se
cumplan los hechos.*²

Jorge Luis Borges ("El Sueño de
Pedro Henríquez Ureña")

Introduction

"The *Oresteia* is a trilogy, but from no point of view is the division between the second and the third plays either so wide or so deep as that between the first and second", declares Kitto (1970:78). His diagnosis holds true from a chronological point of view, where a gap of ten to twelve years separates the *Agamemnon* from the *Choephoroi*. However, from a structural point of view, I would argue for a continuity between the two plays: a mournful ethos provides the background for the return of the male protagonist -- Agamemnon in the first play, and Orestes in the second --

¹ "Narcissus finds ugly what is not the mirror", would be my rough translation of this line of "Sampa", a Brazilian pop song.

² "You will not remember this dream since your oblivion is necessary for the deeds to be accomplished".

each of them deceitfully received by Clytemnestra. While in the *Agamemnon* she successfully fulfills her intent, the *Choephoroi* reverses the syntax of deceit and has Clytemnestra falling prey to Orestes's guileful devices.³ This pattern is visually expressed in the two tableaux that end both plays: the *Agamemnon* displays Clytemnestra and Aegisthus standing triumphantly over the dead bodies of Agamemnon and Cassandra; a quadrangular antithesis of life and death that is repeated in the second play, where the dead bodies of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are watched over by Orestes and Pylades (whose silent presence eloquently marks Electra's absence).

These spectacular (and specular) tableaux are dramatically supported by the structuration of the tragic conflict which pairs characters with one another: Clytemnestra and Aegisthus (in my reading, Clytemnestra and the chorus); Agamemnon and Cassandra; Orestes and Pylades; Orestes and Electra (just to mention the human level). Such a device has different imports in the two plays. In the *Agamemnon*, it entails, for example, a transferential relation in the chorus/Clytemnestra pair, as shown in the previous chapter. In the *Choephoroi*, the pairing of characters enhances the general pattern of ambiguity that prevails in this trilogy, and in the tragic discourse, as

³ This argument is developed by Lebeck in her reading of the first stasimon of the *Choephoroi*, in which she demonstrates the latter's specular structure vis-à-vis the *Agamemnon* (1967:182-85).

Vidal-Naquet argues (in Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 1988:103-137). In other words, the non-differentiation of characters in the second play is one of the resonances of the multifarious instability, of the disorder that informs its dramatic universe in its depiction of the struggle to define the semantic field of the signifier *Dikē* (Justice). Furthermore, such ambiguity goes *pari passu* with another tragic feature: reversal, or in Aristotelian terms, peripety. "Reversal of the situation", writes Aristotle in the *Poetics*, "is a change by which the action veers round its opposite, subject always to our rule of probability or necessity" (1911:40; 1452a 22-24). Thus, for example, the pair that stands triumphantly near the *ekkyklēma* at the end of the *Agamemnon* will be the one to be lying dead on it as the *Choephoroi* ends.

In accordance with this pattern of reversal, my reading of the *Choephoroi* will bring to the fore the ob-scene event of Clytemnestra's dream. This discussion, however, presupposes an analysis of the specular structure that sustains the entire play and the characters that move on its proscenium. In other words, my starting point and general frame is the pattern of the redoubling of characters, i.e., the ambiguity and reversal which also informs the dramatisation of the dream. It is my contention that this dream, as an ob-scene signifier, articulates other dimensions so as to make the Name-of-the-Father not only a

necessary but an imperative principle in the tragic universe of the *Oresteia*.

Pas de Deux

As the title of the trilogy advances, Orestes's appearance in the play constitutes an event of paramount importance, albeit deprived of the ceremonial apparatuses which surrounded the arrival of his predecessor, Agamemnon. Contrary to the victorious king, the son returns, unauthorised, from a long-imposed exile. But similarly to the former, Orestes comes back with a partner -- Pylades -- whose presence, unlike Agamemnon's partner, has been seen by scholars as a troubling one (e.g. Fraenkel, 1962, vol.III:821; Taplin, 1977:334; Garvie, 1986:48). Indeed, Pylades's laconic presence, especially when contrasted with Cassandra's, is an uncomfortable one. Ultimately they both resonate Apollo's luminous *verba*, but while the Trojan prophetess is given over two hundred lines, Pylades has just three.

From the point of view of the redoubling of characters, Pylades can be regarded as an economical device which introduces the dominant pattern of Orestes's characterisation, namely the latter's identification with various elements, ranging from the bestial to the divine, which finds in the recognition scene with Electra its most

emblematic instance. Pylades's part in the dramatic text is brief, whereas in the theatrical one he functions as a visual support to introduce Orestes's multiple identifications in the course of the play. This supporting role is made possible precisely by the fact that he is virtually a silent character, a *kōphòn prósōpon* (Garvie, 1986:48), which thus can be constituted as "Orestes's shade" (Fraenkel, 1962, vol.III: 821), that is, an index of Orestes's various *dédoulements*.

The very first verbal utterances of the *Choephoroi* are indicative of the ambiguous or undifferentiated identities which inform the Orestes/Pylades pair. Orestes evokes Hermes, in his chthonic aspect, and immediately associates himself with the god in a highly cryptic sentence: "Hermes of the earth, you who watch over your father's kingdom, be my preserver and fight beside me in my prayer", is Lloyd-Jones's (1970b:9) rendering of the intricate "*Hermē Chthónie, patrō epopteúōn krátē, sōtēr genoû moi xúmmachós t'aitouménō*" (1-2). Even though what constitutes today the text of Orestes's prayer is a collage of quotes drawn from Aristophanes's the *Frogs*⁴ and from texts of ancient commentators, the invocation of Hermes qua an under world deity -- which is repeated in Electra's prayer (124b) -- is crucial to my reading of this play. First of all Hermes

⁴ The three opening lines of the *Choephoroi* are delivered by Aeschylus in the *Frogs* 1126-28.

performs a mediation between the worlds of the living and the dead, and between the Olympic empire of Zeus in the *Agamemnon* and the chthonic forces of the *Choephoroi* (Lloyd-Jones, 1970b:9-10; Garvie, 1986:48-49). The chthonic world is a fundamental reference in this play, particularly as regards Orestes's characterisation as, for example, the serpent who will act out Clytemnestra's dream. Some of the multiple resonances and consequences of Orestes's association with the chthonic world will be explored in the course of this analysis.

Hermes's ability to traverse borders parallels Orestes's condition as an exile (a stranger) who returns (home). Moreover, the god's invocation as the one who belongs to two worlds, or who blurs the borders between the familiar world of the living and the uncanny world of the dead tersely intimates the dramatic borders within which the characters, Orestes in particular, will move. Theirs is the space where "confusion... hath made his masterpiece" since its ordering principle, Agamemnon, is dead.⁵ Non-differentiation also marks the language of Orestes's invocation: Hermes is summoned in both a religious and a warlike vocabulary. To the first semantic field belongs the participle *epopteúōn* (to regard with awe, to reverend), which, as Goldhill indicates, is drawn from the language of

⁵ Macduff's expression (*Macbeth*, II,iii,65) of the disarray into which *Macbeth's* dramatic world is plunged after Duncan's murder resonates the chaos which marks the *Choephoroi*.

the mysteries (1984:104); to the second is the compound noun *xúmmachós* (*syn* + *máchē*; i.e., partner or companion in battle).

It is within this frame of ambiguity that the appositive clause "*patrō eopteuōn crātē*" (1) has to be read.⁶ Since Aristophanes, the subject and object of this clause have been under debate, as Garvie's commentary stresses (1986:49-50). Is it Orestes or Hermes who "reveres the power that comes from the father"? Is this father Zeus or Agamemnon? Contrary to most scholars' attempt to resolve this ambiguity (e.g., Lloyd-Jones, 1970b:9-10; Garvie, 1986:48), I would argue, with Goldhill (1984:103-4), that it should be taken in its full inextricability. Whether these lines are Aeschylus's or Aristophanes's "Aeschylus's", they constitute in my view one of the most fortuitous instances of how the themes and structure of a play can be dramatically introduced. If ambiguity is one of the constitutive features of the language of the *Agamemnon* (e.g., the numerous lines devoted to the dispute over the interpretation of the beacon sign), in the *Choephoroi* it is

⁶ The ambiguity of this clause is undone in translation. In addition to Lloyd-Jones's, quoted above, we have, for example, the Loeb translation as "thou who dost guard the powers that are thy sire's" (1952:159). Less wordy, but equally unequivocal is Lattimore's: "Hermes, lord of the dead, who watch over the powers of my fathers" (1960:93).

risen to a paroxysmal level.⁷ It is this trait, with its unsettling effects, that will make the Areopagus, i.e., the institution of the Name-of-the-Father, a categorical imperative in the *Eumenides*. And it is Orestes's, rather than the critic's, task to solve these ambiguities. And since his steps move along this teleological path, they must be followed.

Orestes's return can be seen as a form of return of the repressed which thus destabilises the state of affairs in Argos. But as his prologue attests, his own identity is at shambles: he is an exile in his own land, that is, someone deprived of ties with his family (*génos*) and his polis. This double banishment is met with a tautological affirmation of his belonging: "I am come to this land and am returning home from exile", is the Loeb translator's version (1952:159) of "*hēkō gār es gēn tēnde kaì katérchomai*" (3). Similarly to the ambiguous appositive clause quoted above, the reiteration of fairly similar verbs in this statement has been a critical point since Aristophanes.⁸ Rather than trying to "amend" it,⁹ I suggest that this tautology be

⁷ The ambiguity of the tragic logos in the *Oresteia* is an argument fully developed by Goldhill in his excellent *Reading Greek Tragedy* (1986).

⁸ As Garvie points out (1986:50), the comic poet has Euripides complain about this tautology in the *Frogs* 1154 ff.

⁹ As Lloyd-Jones, for example, does in his translation of this line as "For I have come to this land, returning from exile" (1970b:9). More problematic is Lattimore's option: "Here is my own soil that I walk. I have come home" (1960:93), which glosses over

read as part of Orestes's symptomatic rhetoric. His banishment has alienated him from the realm of the father, from the "*pátrō... krátē*". In a Lacanian terminology, this exile can be read as a banishment from the Symbolic order, i.e., as a foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father.¹⁰ As a result of such an alienation Orestes is cast in a pattern of non-dissociation: he is paired up with Pylades and then with Hermes. In psychoanalytic terms, this amalgamation marks the order of the Imaginary, of fused identities or identifications: "*tout imaginaire a du deux dans le coup*", observes Lacan (1975/76:35). When read against this confusion, Orestes's tautological statement is an insistence on his rights as heir to his father's *dómos* (house, household, family), of whom he is, like Hermes, the rightful "saviour" ("*sōtēr*", 2). In other words, the insistence on the possession can be seen as an insistence to be possessed, to be governed by the genitive *patrō*.¹¹ From a psychoanalytic point of view, Orestes's tautology announces a claim which will be fully voiced in the course of the play, namely the

not only the important idea conveyed by *katéchomai*, as a technical term meaning "to return from exile", but also Orestes's insistence on the idea of returning to his legitimate place, which is put forth by the use of the verbs *hékō* ("to have come", "to be present", and even "to belong"; Liddell and Scott, 1994) and *katéchomai* in one single line.

¹⁰ Serge Leclaire writes that the foreclosed in Lacan refers to "what is rejected from the Symbolic" (1971:84).

¹¹ As Goldhill notices, *pátros* is used in the genitive case twenty-three times in the *Choephoroi* (1984:103).

necessity for an inscription in the Symbolic order, that is in the realm of the Father, of Law.

The lock of hair Orestes deposits on his father's tomb is a signifier of this inscription, a token of his kinship ties,¹² whose symbolic status is explicitly acknowledged: he calls it a "second... sign of [his] mourning, a *"deúteron... penthētērion"* (7). Rather than a sign, the shaky language of this play renders visible the status of the lock of hair as a signifier. In Orestes's language this fragment of his body can be seen as an expression of the irreparable loss which presides over the subject's entry into the Symbolic, a loss which also receives the name of castration.¹³ When read by Electra, the signifier of the lock of hair becomes a *"néou... mýthou"* (165), the herald of news (and of another tale). As she later admits, it is a *"tekmērion"* (205), (i.e., a sure sign or token) which returns to articulate other signifiers, besides the grief for the dead, as I will demonstrate below.

Orestes's lock of hair is entangled with another signifier, his footprints, which are a "second token" (*"deúteron tekmerion"*, 205) of her brother's identity that Electra fails to recognise. Together they form the fulcrum of one of the most difficult scenes of this trilogy: the

¹² As Lloyd-Jones indicates, only a close relation would make such an offering to the dead (1970b:18).

¹³ As Leclaire reminds us, castration is "the separation of 'a small thing' from the body" (1971:54).

recognition scene of Electra and Orestes. This difficulty ranges from corruptions in the text,¹⁴ passes through problems of verisimilitude, or the Aristotelian "law of probability" (e.g., the exactness of Electra and Orestes's footprints, 206), and reaches more symbolic levels, which resonate around the question of recognition of identities. Without disregarding philology, I would suggest that these problems be regarded as traversed by one another, rather than being treated as belonging to different fields of specialisation.

Similarly to the interpretation of the beacon-signal in the *Agamemnon*, the recognition scene problematises the reading process. At play here are the mechanisms and procedures Electra adopts (or rejects) in her reading of the signifiers of Orestes's lock of hair and footprints which, by the same token, concern and implicate us, critics, as readers of her reading. In a last analysis, these questions are informed by a more general and fundamental one, namely, the theoretical parameters that ground the definition of

¹⁴ The *Choephoroi* in general is "an unusually corrupt text", as Garvie indicates in the preface of his commented edition of the play (1986:v). Similarly to the prologue, the recognition scene presents serious problems of emendations and interpolations. The genuineness of lines 205-211 is severely put into question by the majority of Aeschylean scholarship. To Fraenkel, for example, this is such a serious matter that merits a long appendix -- "The Footprints in the *Choephoroi*" -- included in his extensive commentary of the *Agamemnon* (1962, vol.III:815-826).

language.¹⁵ For Saussure, as shown in Part I, language is "a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas" (1966:10). This conception ensues an understanding of linguistic interaction which can be synthetically described in terms of sign-sending and receiving.¹⁶

Lacanian psychoanalysis, as previously shown, obliquely advocates a theory of language which rests not on "the death of the sign" (Eco, 1986:14-15), but on the rupture of the univocity that informs its conception, i.e., the relation between signifier and signified. Given that this relation is never stable, let alone symmetrical, as the Saussurian model implies, Lacan posits the primacy of the signifier on the grounds that it produces multiple signifieds: "*le signifiant... est ce qui a effet de signifié*" (Lacan, 1975:22). Such destabilisation of the relation between signifier and signified necessarily implies that "language cannot be fitted into a mechanistic model of signal-sending and receiving", as Goldhill writes (1986:4). Indeed, the

¹⁵ The broadness and complexities of the theorisations on this issue render it impossible -- within the scope of the present analysis -- to provide, even if synthetically, an account of the major currents of this debate. From the latter I extract the formulations which bear a closer relevance to my discussion. For a detailed discussion of this debate I refer to Culler's *Structuralist Poetics* (1975).

¹⁶ This is a synthetic expression of the argument developed by Jakobson, who, in his widely known "Linguistics and Poetics" (1981), provides a typology of the functions of language, according to the emphasis placed on each of the three components of the communicative process, i.e., the sender, the message, and the receiver.

sender receives his/her message in an inverted manner, as Lacan repeatedly points out: "*le langage humain constituerait... une communication où l'émetteur reçoit du récepteur son propre message sous une forme inversée...*"

(1966:298). This elliptic statement puts in relief the transferential process which grounds all linguistic interaction. As Barbara Johnson expounds,

the message I am reading may be either my own (narcissistic) message backwards or the way in which that message is always already traversed by its own otherness to itself or by the narcissistic message of the other" (in Felman, 1982:503).

The recognition scene stages this understanding of language *qua* a narcissistic play of equivocation.

The *méconnaissance*¹⁷ of recognition

The primary (and named) addressee of Orestes's lock of hair is Agamemnon, the dead king/father whose tomb acquires the ambiguous status of an altar, as the chorus later makes explicit: "in reverence for thy father's tomb, as it were an altar" (1952:167) ("*aidouménē soi bōmōn hōs týmbon patrōs*",

¹⁷ *Méconnaissance* implies both the impossibility or failure to recognise, and its more direct sense of misrecognition. It is an important notion in Lacan (e.g. "The Mirror Stage", 1966:93-100) and refers to the (deceptive) mechanisms of identification which inform the constitution of the ego.

106).¹⁸ However, this message of grief for the father reverts back onto Orestes, disclosing a narcissistic mourning for the inexorable loss he has to go through in order to be able to "return from exile", i.e., the "token" ("*tekmērion*") he has to pay to enter into the Symbolic domain of the "power of the father" ("*patrō... krátē*", 1). Such fragmentation of Orestes's body is further emphasised by his footprints, "*perigraphā podoîn*" (207), which can be read, quite literally, as his graphic inscription onto his land, that is, into the Symbolic.

Orestes's mournful ritual/message conflates sender and receiver. As Goldhill notices, commenting on the use of the middle voice, "this opening prayer... is a prayer 'for himself', 'on his own behalf'" (1984:105). Such conflation of the two poles of the communicative process is informed by desire,¹⁹ which as Lacan points out, "*s'inscrit dans le registre différent d'un désir substitué à un désir*" (1966:621; 1977:257). This dialectic of desire brings forth from the ob-scene another addressee: Electra. In dramatic

¹⁸ Agamemnon's status as "God the Father" and "King of Kings" which emerges here is articulated by Freud as a case of "the earlier father-surrogate having been abandoned in favour of the superior concept of God" (1913:150).

¹⁹ In "The Space and Dialogue of Desire: Lacan, Greimas, and Narrative Temporality", Ronald Schleifer (1983:870-890) quotes A.J. Greimas's scheme concerning the relation between sender and receiver. The latter calls this relation "communication", and posits the "object" as its mediating instance. The object, in its turn, is for Greimas "concomitantly, object of desire and object of communication" (1966:178).

terms she is the one who receives/reads Orestes's letters (or signifiers, as they are used synonymously in Lacan).

The staging of such reading is significant: Orestes and Pylades go into hiding at the sight of the procession of the chorus of libation bearers and Electra.²⁰ The reason for their concealment is given by Orestes: "Pylades, let us stand out of the way, so that I may learn for certain what this supplication of the women may import" (1970b:11). That is, the strangeness of these women and their actions is such that it overflows the limits of what can be or is known: "to what misfortune does it look like?", or "with what misfortune should I identify them?", are Garvie's suggestions for "*kakō dé tō proseikádzō táde*" (12). Some critics (e.g., Lebeck, 1971) see this prudent attitude of Orestes as inspired by other motives, such as a foreshadowing of his encounter with the chorus of the even more uncanny Erinyes. I would argue, instead, that what deserves further investigation is his concealment after he has recognised Electra and the purpose of their ritual.

Orestes sees her as "Electra, my sister, whose grief marks her out" (1970b:11). Like himself, she bears the mark of mourning; that is, they are identified and identifiable by means of their grief. In spite of such strong recognition, he refuses to reveal himself to her. The nature

²⁰ Taplin shows that this device is not unknown in Greek drama, albeit more common in comedy. As regards tragedy, he argues that this might have been an early use (1977:334-5).

of such refusal -- or denial, as psychoanalysis would call it -- can be further understood by means of Electra's decoding of the traces Orestes has left, i.e., of his message and its narcissistic return. Electra reads the first piece of evidence of Orestes's presence, the lock of hair, as a part of herself: "no one could have cut off this strand, except myself" (1960:99). The stichomythia through which this conclusion is reached is indicative of the tension that envelops the verbal exchange between the chorus and Electra (166-180). Electra metonymically turns this token into an extension of herself, thus denying it any alterity. Such rhetorical procedure is pushed further when she comes across the footprints, which not only are alike ("*hómoioi*", 206), but are like hers ("*t'emoîsin emphereîs*", 206). The reiterative homogenisation of these body parts and their contiguous appropriation deserves attention.

As Lacan has expounded, "desire is a metonymy" (1966:528), i.e., desire is made manifest in the metonymic process. In Electra's rhetoric Orestes's "parts" are treated as "object o", that is, the object cause of desire, that which stands in the place of what has been lost (Leclaire, 1971:80). This treatment of the other as "object o" marks the masculine position in the Lacanian formulations of sexual difference, as I have shown in Part I. That is to say, Electra's phallic *jouissance*, which comes about in her reading of these two signifiers, is an antinomy to her

biological sex and reveals a denial of sexual difference, and of the limits it imposes: "For myself, oh grant that I may prove in heart more chaste, far more, than my mother, and in hand more innocent", is Electra's request to surpass the (de)faults of her mother (1952:173; 140-41).²¹

In terms of the Lacanian registers, her contiguous treatment of Orestes's body parts constitutes a hindrance to the limitations imposed by the Symbolic, and an insistence on the Imaginary wholeness of non-differentiation. The consequences of this primacy of the Imaginary are expressed, in a different vocabulary, in the scholarly discomfort as regards the alleged corruption of Aeschylus's text (lines 204-211). Fraenkel, for example, claims that the text has to be "cured" of its pathological impurity (1962, vol.III:818).²² This pharmacological attempt has been practised since Euripides's *Electra* (e.g., lines 520-544), whose reparative efforts can be read in the parody it

²¹ Electra's word for chastity is *sōphronestéran* (140), which "often occurs particularly in a sexual context", as Goldhill indicates (1984:117). I stress the need to read beyond the moral limits of propriety vis-à-vis sexuality that Electra is evoking, to heed to her desire to be "*polŷ mētrós*" (140-41), i.e., much more than her mother.

²² When analysing a similar problem, Fraenkel proposes the following solution: "the text of the speech of Orestes... [973-1006] had to be cured according to the old aphorism *hokōsa phārmaka ouk iētai, sīdēros iētai*. We shall see... that the same maxim holds good for the criticism of the footprint-lines" (1962, vol.III:818). (The Greek maxim can be roughly translated as "when whatsoever the medicine does not cure, the knife cures"). Such an erudite and literal advocacy of castration is hard to come by in the field of classical studies...

promotes of the Aeschylean recognition. The psychoanalytic frame, I would argue, is more tolerant than the philological, insofar as it fosters not the supremacy of the "healthy" Symbolic order over the others, but the interrelation of the three.

In the latter's light, Electra's reading can be regarded as a continuum of Orestes's mournful narrative: his narcissistic prayer and offering, aimed at eschewing the loss provoked by his return to the "power of the father", is carried out by another of his doubles, Electra, who blatantly denies the loss in her metonymic attempt to attach back onto herself the pieces of his body. I would pose this desire for continuity, for non-differentiation as the first reason for Orestes refusal in identifying himself to his sister, which lasts from line 22 to 211. In this respect I think Kitto is again perspicacious when he argues, contrary to a respectable part of Aeschylean scholarship, that "the passage is not a recognition scene" (1970:81). As Aristotle defined in the *Poetics*, recognition (*anagnōrisis*) "as the name indicates (*sēmaínei*), is a change from ignorance (*agnoías*) to knowledge" (*gnōsin*) (1911:41; 1452a29-31). Instead, what we have here is a refusal to go through this change (*metabolē*) Aristotle refers to, i.e., a denial ("*une négation formelle*", Lacan, 1966:179) to acknowledge the other as such, and the insistence on the latter's specular extension of one's ego. This is what constitutes for Lacan

the *méconnaissance* that frames the constitution of identities.²³

The lock of hair and the footprints are signifiers that articulate other levels of signification, other reasons for the non-recognition, and ultimately the Real/Symbolic/Imaginary triad. As pieces of body they are the outcome of a process of *sparagmós*, of dismemberment, which echoes that performed by the chorus in the *Agamemnon* (as well as announcing the form privileged by Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex*). Orestes's cutting off of a lock of hair, in particular,²⁴ mirrors the "splitting" (Kitto, 1970:76) the chorus goes through when their parricidal desire is acted out by Clytemnestra. It is an act of self-mutilation which goes *pari passu* with a mourning ritual. This connection between mutilation (castration) and mourning is expanded in the scene where the brother and sister finally acknowledge each other.

Again following a stichomythia, in which Electra's recognition is skeptically expressed in the interrogative "am I then to address thee as in truth Orestes?" (1952:183, 224), Orestes presents her with yet another significant

²³ Besides his well-known essay "The Mirror Stage", this notion of *méconnaissance* is further developed in Lacan in "Propos sur la causalité psychique" (1966:151-193).

²⁴ The signifying preeminence of the lock in relation to the footprints is curiously expressed by Fraenkel: "the lock is something infinitely more delicate and precious than footprints..." (1962, vol.III:820). Again another comment on castration, but this time aestheticising it.

piece of evidence: "put the lock to the place from which I cut it, and see how like is your brother's head to your own" (1970b:21; 229-30). The text of this paradigmatic case of amalgamation is another debatable point of the *Choephoroi*. In a footnote to the Greek text, Garvie observes that "*versuum ordo incertus*" (1986:11). I would argue that this uncertainty concerns not only the order of lines, but that the latter is the philological support of a structural disorder, epitomised in the uncertainty about what is male and female, brother and sister. *In summa*, this uncertainty is another expression of the more general failure (or denial) of recognition qua "recognition of *phílos*", of kinship (Goldhill, 1984:121).

Kinship (*philía*) is a highly fluctuating term in the tragic idiom of the *Oresteia*: "our nearest kin, I know, are bitter foes to us" ("*toûs philtátous gàr oída nōin ónta pikroús*"), are Orestes's concluding words to his disordered speech (1952:183; 234).²⁵ This paradoxical status of kinship relations refers not only to Clytemnestra. The brothers' "recognition" is followed by another paradox, the *kommos*, a song in which Orestes, Electra, and the chorus perform "a strange ritual combination of mourning and

²⁵ The ambiguity of (kinship) relations is not a prerogative of the *Oresteia*. As Garvie writes in his commentary of these last lines, "the paradox is a common one in tragedy, in which relationships are confused, and those whom one should naturally [sic] treat as *phíloi* become one's *echthroí* [enemy]". Garvie also notes that *phíloi* can refer to kinship relations from its regular use as "one's nearest and dearest, i.e., one's family" (1986:103).

conjunction" (Goldhill, 1992:24). That is, mourning is the thematic point of articulation or conflation of these characters, the distinguishable mark which makes Orestes and Electra undistinguishable, and their macabre means of celebrating their reunion.

In the psychoanalytic rhetoric, mourning is conceived of as a reparative procedure vis-à-vis the ambivalent attitude towards the (totemic) father. "When the deed is done, the slaughtered animal is lamented and bewailed. The mourning is obligatory, imposed by dread of a threatened retribution... its chief purpose is to disclaim responsibility for the killing", writes Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (1913:140). The hyperbolic mourning for Agamemnon, which occupies practically half of the *Choephoroi*, is to be read as the oxymoric double of guilt. "What wise words may I utter, what prayer may I make to my father?... I do not know what I can say" (1970b:14; 88-91). Electra here replicates the chorus in the *Agamemnon*: "how shall I weep for you? What word shall I utter from a loving heart?" (1970a:97; 1490-1). Such loss for words, for a Symbolic register, binds together the mournful agents of both plays. This homogenisation is made clear by the title of the second play: *choēphoroi*, inflected in the masculine plural, when, initially at least, it is formed by women slaves and Electra. This signals that the protagonist here is not Orestes, nor Electra, but a collectivity constituted on the basis of their mournful

celebration. Furthermore, I would argue, it entails an expansion of the actants²⁶ of the murderous deed of the previous play. The choruses of both plays, joined by Orestes and Electra, perform the (ideological) imperative of Agamemnon's murder so that the latter can become another function, or actant, namely, the Name-of-the-Father.

From the point of view of the dramatic structure, (or the superficial narrative structure), such postulation can be regarded as far-fetched, or impossible, insofar as the murder is actually committed by Clytemnestra. A psychoanalytically informed frame of reading, however, can accommodate the specificities of the theatrical narration, and the "impossible" quality of this interpretation. Agamemnon is killed in the ob-scene, that is, in the space that I have been characterising as that which harbours actions which are impossible to be realised on the proscenium. Such space corresponds in Lacanian terms to the Real, that is, the place of the impossible, as Lacan repeatedly states in Seminar XVII, *L'Envers de la psychanalyse* (1991). The expanded chorus of mourners are the Real (and not the real) murders who thus gather together in order to expiate their guilt. Thus we have another reason for both Orestes and Electra's prolonged mis-recognition, or

²⁶ The notion of actants is used here in consonance to Greimas's definition of the term. He claims that the former are "groups of actors" ("*classes d'acteurs*"; 1966:175) thus constituted according to the function they perform in the narrative (1966:172-76).

denial: to recognise each other would imply an acknowledgment of their crime. When the denial is no longer sustainable, i.e., when, through the "object o" of the lock of hair, the Real is descried,²⁷ they resort into the strange ritual of mourning and conjuring of Agamemnon, as Goldhill mentioned above, an antinomy which can only take place in the Imaginary register of non-differentiation: "a lament that brings glory is a source of gratification to the Atreidae in front of the house" is Orestes's oxymoric equation in Garvie's translation (1986:129) of the significant "*chárites d'homoíōs kéklēntai góos eukleēs prosthodómois Atreídais*" (320-22). Before Freud, Orestes claims that mourning (*góos*) is just like (*homoíōs*) a superlative glory (*eu-kleēs*) in that it brings *jouissance* (*chárites*).

The idealisation of Agamemnon that takes place in the *kommos*, in the mourning ceremony, provides the common basis for the pact established by these actants. Inspired by the *Oresteia* Freud²⁸ writes: "...in the sanctification of the blood tie... the brothers were declaring that no one of them must be treated by another as their father was treated by

²⁷ In *Démasquer le réel: Un essai sur l'objet en psychanalyse*, Leclaire argues that the Real can be faintly unveiled through what Lacan has conceptualised as the "object o" (1971).

²⁸ Freud's source is explicitly acknowledged only in his late writings, in *Moses and Monotheism*, when he returns to the question of the father and cites the *Oresteia* as a paradigmatic case of the establishment of a desirable social order (1939a:114).

them all jointly" (1913:146). This pact is the spine of the *Choephoroi*, i.e., the libation bearers, as Aeschylus suggestive title indicates. The libation is, according to Gernet, "a method of contract", where the wine (in its equivalence with blood) "is charged with a particular mana and over which there sometimes hangs a general prohibition" (1981:169). This social contract, however, established on "the fetishistic disavowal of... guilt" (Žižek, 1994:57) is, like all social phenomena, far from being a *fait accompli*, and thus is threatened by yet another irruption of the Real: Clytemnestra's dream.

In Search of an Author

Clytemnestra's dream, like the Trojan war or Agamemnon's murder, is another ob-scene event that leaks onto the proscenium. It is brought to the fore by the chorus, who, in announcing that they are "sent forth from the palace" (1952:161) ("*ialtòs ek dómōn*", 22), underline the contrast between back and forth, between the *opísō-skēnion* and the *pró-skēnion*.²⁹ In this mediation, the chorus alludes to the dream in an oblique manner, i.e., by the reference to an interpreter: the "dream-prophet of the house" (1970b:12),

²⁹ I stress this topological opposition in its difference from the more psychologically informed "inside/outside" that Padel (1992), for example, uses to think of the Greek stage and its verbal realisation, i.e., the drama.

who has ordered libations to be poured in order to appease "those below the earth [who] make angry complaint and harbour wrath against the killers" (1970b:12). This allusion implies that what is at stake here is not the status of dreams, as was the case in the *Agamemnon*,³⁰ but its interpretation. Once again, Hermes is invoked., this time in a less obvious manner.

The Hermeneutic quality of dream interpretation in Ancient Greece is put in relief since Homer. In the *Iliad*, for example, Achilles recommends Agamemnon to seek the help from "some seer, some priest, or some reader of dreams" (1942:7) ("*...tina mántin... ē hierēa, ē kaì oneiropólon* ", I 62-63), in order to solve the enigmatic hardships Apollo has sent onto them. Together with prophets (*mántis*) and priests, interpreters of dreams dwell between the divine and the human, between the known and the unknown. Like Hermes they perform an important mediation: they conduct the dreamer through the passage from ignorance to knowledge, i.e., they enable a form of recognition.

The more philosophically-oriented fourth century B.C. conceives of dream-interpretation as a critical activity.

³⁰ The chorus in the *Agamemnon* questions Clytemnestra as to whether she respects "the persuasive visions of dreams" ("*...oneirōn phásmat' eupithē*", 274), which she dismisses as "fancies of a slumbering brain" (1952:27). Aeschylus's *phásmata* is equivalent to Plato's *phantásmata*, i.e., the "visionary forms" one has in dreams, as Patricia Miller points out (1994:40). In his treatise "On Dreams", Aristotle also refers to *phantásmata* (e.g., 1965:92; 464a18) as the images or apparitions dreams are made of.

Aristotle, for example, describes such activity in the following terms:

The most skillful interpreter of dreams is the one who can observe similarities [*homoiótētas*]... I say similarities, because the images [*phantásmata*] of dreams are more or less similar to images [*eidōlois*] of objects in water... A skillful [*deinós*] interpretation [*krínein*] then is the one that distinguishes and recognises the images [*eidōlōn*] which are displaced and in disorder... (1965:93; 464b6-14)³¹

The first point to be noted in this dense definition concerns its contribution to the field of iconology. Three foundational concepts are advanced here: similarity (*hómoios*, in its superlative form *homoiótetas*), and images, which Aristotle distinguishes in terms of *phantásmata* and *eidōlōn*. The first is often translated as "appearances", or "revived versions of [previous waking] impressions" (Mitchell, 1987:10) which are produced in dreams. *Eídōlon*, in its turn, while referring to "any unsubstantial form", also, and particularly in Aristotle, can be rendered as "an image reflected in a mirror or in water", or as a mental image (Liddell and Scott, 1994), that is, a representation.³²

³¹ My translation, after René Mugnier's edition and French translation of Aristotle's *Parva Naturalia*, or *Petits traités d'histoire naturelle* (1965).

³² In fact "representation" is how Mugnier originally translates "*eídolon*". I have opted for "images" however in order to emphasise the ambiguity Aristotle seems to be exploring in his definition. The discussion of the theoretical imports of these concepts go beyond the scope of my analysis. For a comprehensive survey of these issues, see Mitchell's *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (1987).

The second and most important point, for the purposes of this discussion, is the Aristotelian understanding of the interpreter's task. It concerns the identification of similarities³³ between the "disordered" and "displaced" dream-images (*phantásmata*) with the ordered images (*eídōla*) of the representational level. Such process presupposes the interpreter's skillfulness (*deinós*) to discriminate (*krínei*) the material presented to him. That is to say, the interpretation of dreams is a critical³⁴ activity which, as such, implies the separation, the differentiation of a myriad of images. The interpreter then is a critic who has to observe (*theōreîn*) the dream material in order to make distinctions which will enable a meaningful rearrangement of the dream under analysis. This ordering the critico-interpretation of dreams has to promote lies on the fact that dreams are, in Homer's words, "*amēchanoi akritómythoi*", i.e., "baffling and unclear in meaning" (*Odyssey*, XIX.560; 1942:269). In a more literal translation, *amēchanoi* qualifies that which is extraordinarily difficult.

³³ This process of identification of similarities replicates Aristotle's qualification of the metaphoric mechanism in the *Poetics*: "to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances" (1911:87) ("*tò gàr eû metaphéreîn tò tò hómoion theōreîn estin*") (1459a7-8). In this sense, George Devereux is correct when he asserts that "according to Greek thought and modern research, the dream is, in a sense, a metaphor" (1976:xxx).

³⁴ The adjective critical is a direct derivative of the Greek *kritikós*, which comes from the verb *krínō* (*krínei*, in its infinitive form), meaning to separate, to discern, to choose, among others.

Akritómythoi can be decomposed as *akrítos* (undiscernible or disordered), and *mythoi* (speeches or tales). The interpreter's activity then is to insert order into, to be critical of, this tale so that it can become meaningful.

The textual quality of dreams -- subsumed in both Homer and Aristotle -- is put in relief in a much later (second century A.D.) treatise on dreams and their interpretation, namely Artemidorus's *Interpretation of Dreams* (1975) or *Oneirocrítica* (1963). Among the various definitions and descriptions he provides of his critical method and its object, this lengthy one is worthy of quotation:

...There is nothing more difficult or troublesome than to observe the combinations and confusion of the dream images and to select one explanation from the many... But just as there is an order and sequence in actual events, so also in dreams one should naturally follow a certain order... Dreams in which significant elements have been combined are naturally complicated and difficult for most people to interpret. But I have set down everything in an orderly fashion and as methodically and instructively as possible, so that their meaning might be easily intelligible. School teachers, once they have taught their students the values of letters, then show them how they are to use the letters together. (1975:175; 1963, III, 66)

In the conclusion of this section Artemidorus is even more explicit as regards the critical reading of the dream text:

...One should interpret all complicated dreams, collecting and combining each of the main points into a complete whole. In judging a dream, therefore, one must imitate the diviners. For they know how each individual sign fits into the whole and base their judgement as much on the total sum of the signs as on each individual sign. (1975:176; 1963, III, 66)

Clytemnestra's dream belongs to the category Artemidorus calls "complicated", or to the Homeric *akritómythoi*. Thus it requires "readers of dreams like these" ("*kritaí <te> tōnd' oneipátōn*" (Choe. 37; 1952:163). Given what has been expounded above, this reader should perform the task of introducing order into a disorderly complex text so as to make it meaningful. Such endeavour parallels the Foucauldian notion of the "author function". As he defines in *The Discourse on Language*, the author is "the unifying principle in a particular group of writings or statements, lying at the origins of their significance, as the seat of their coherence" (1972:221). Similarly to Pirandello's characters, the chorus in the *Choephoroi* comes forth onto the proscenium in search of an author, of an *oneirómantis* who can turn meaningful their confusing (*akritós*) tale (*mýthos*).

The language in which this demand is articulated is truncated, and constitutes yet another possible case of corruption, as Garvie indicates (1986:57). However, as in previous cases, when philology puts a certain passage under suspicion on the grounds of corruption or twisted grammar, there are usually other levels of deviation at stake. Who this *oneirómantis* is remains unspecified in the ambiguous syntax of the antistrophe that names the interpreter (lines 32-41). This ambiguity, I would claim, more than being part of a purely philological problem, is a structural necessity

of the text, as I will show below.

The Two-Headed Monster

One of the constitutive features of the tragic discourse, Aristotle claims in the *Poetics*, is the fact that it is an imitation of actions (*práxeōs*, 1449b24) which happens by means of doing (*drōnton*, 1449b26) things rather than narrating (*apangelías*, 1449b26-7) them. The scene of Clytemnestra's dream as staged in the *Choephoroi* is an apparent contradiction of this principle: albeit a catalytic event which triggers off Orestes's revengeful deed, it is nonetheless brought onto the proscenium in the form of a report delivered by the chorus. This breach of the Aristotelian precept is, I would argue, but apparent. Bearing in mind Barthes's pertinent remark that "the order of language is the only tragic order" (1963:18), I propose a closer look at the chorus's *apangelía* (i.e., report or narrative), in particular at the language of its staging.

The first aspect to be noted refers to the spatio-temporal gap that separates the "actual" dream and its staging. As observed above, it is not only dreamt but also told by Clytemnestra *in the ob-scene*, that is to say that there is a split between the space of the dream and the one of its staging, a split which, as I have argued before, is instituted by the skene. In addition to the censorial

intervention of the skene, the dream has already taken place when the chorus brings it forth (or actualises it) on the proscenium. The split between the past tense of the event and the present tense of its staging in narrative form poses first of all an antinomy to the present-tense nature of the dramatic genre.³⁵ Moreover, this split undermines the very nature of the dramatic event in that it is expanded in order to accommodate another character or another level of mediation, namely the chorus made messenger. As Barthes reminds us, "between the exterior time and the enclosed time [of the ob-scene] there is the time of the message, which means that we can never be certain that the event received is the same as the event produced" (1963:19) in the ob-scene past. The awareness of this spatio-temporal division as regards the event of Clytemnestra's dream ensues a questioning of the status of the voice that we offhandedly attribute to the queen.

Barthes's "time of the message" and the space of its deliverance can be seen as performing a rhetorical turn in the dream-message. Strictly speaking, the chorus's account of the dream is not done in a straightforward narrative form but in an inquisitorial dialogue conducted by Orestes. In

³⁵ The imperative of the present is put in relief in Aristotle's definition quoted above and corroborated by etymology. "Drama" comes from the verb *dráō*, which means "to do", especially as opposed to *páschō*, "to suffer", "to experience". In defining the tragic "drama", Aristotle emphasises its presentness by making use of the present participle of *dráō*, *drōntōn* (1449b26) as the form through which the tragic actions (*práxeis*) are to be imitated.

other words, the stichomythia in which Clytemnestra's dream is "narrated" is in actual fact a series of responses to Orestes's questions, which begins by his demand for an explanation for the libations sent forth by the queen: "if you know what I ask, tell it me; I wish to learn it" (1970b:39; 522).³⁶ This means that his request for information in effect informs the kind of information the chorus will provide.

Orestes's conductive role is a function conceptualised in narratology in terms of the *focaliser*, i.e., "the subject from whose perspective the fabula is presented" (Bal, 1988:261). This category introduces an important distinction as regards the agency of narration: the narrator (i.e., the one who speaks) does not necessarily coincide with the focaliser (or the one who sees), as narrative theory traditionally held (Bal, 1985:100-18). As the one who sees, the focaliser forcibly establishes what will be seen by others and thus constitutes "the most important, most penetrating, and most subtle means of manipulation", as Bal points out (1985:116). Orestes's manipulative power is attained mainly by means of his sharp questioning of the chorus, of his focussing on certain pieces of information in detriment of others. The recurrent usage of the verb *phrádzō* ("to make known", "to show forth") is a good example of this

³⁶ Garvie suggests that the verb *thelonti* (wish) be rendered as "I should like to hear it", in order to emphasise its use as a "request for information" (1986:187).

strategy. In line 522 it is used in the imperative form: "make me know" ("*emoî phráson*") why the libations are sent. In 526 the chorus is further questioned as regards their knowledge of the dream "so as to make it known" ("*hōst' orthōs phrásai*"). If the chorus has the knowledge, it is Orestes who makes it known, who shows it forth in the light of his wishes. No sooner does the chorus reveal the "nature of the dream" (526), than Orestes asks for "where does the story end and have its conclusion?", in Garvie's translation (1986:188) of "*poi teleutâ kai karanoûtai lōgos*" (528), which puts in relief not only Orestes's hasty interest in the end (*telos*) of the story (as *logos*) but also in what it achieves (*karanōō*). From a thematic point of view, his manipulation finds a conspicuous instance in the choice of topic the chorus has to pursue:

ORESTES

Do you know the nature of the dream, so that you can truly tell it?

CHORUS

She thought she brought forth a snake, according to her own account.

ORESTES

And where ends her story and where lies its consummation?

CHORUS

She laid it to rest in swaddling clothes, as though it were a child.

ORESTES

What food did it desire, the newborn monster?

CHORUS

She herself offered it her breast in the dream.

(1970b:39-40; 526-531)

From the consummation of the dream the focus is swiftly readjusted to the kind of food which fed the child. Similarly to the watchman and the chorus in the *Agamemnon*, both the change of topic and its hastiness have to be taken symptomatically.

Orestes's narratological role as focaliser, as the one who makes seen, is redoubled on the level of the plot with that of the *oneirómantis*, i.e., the unidentified dream-interpreter ambiguously referred to by the chorus (lines 33 and 37). As Aristotle remarked above, the interpretation of dreams entails the observation of similarities, i.e., "*homoiótētas theōrein*" (1965:93; 464b6-7), where the visual (focalising) quality is clearly stressed by the verb *theōrein* ("to look at, view, behold", as well as "to contemplate, consider, observe"; Liddell and Scott, 1994). I would contend that this "theoretical" role the *oneirómantis* performs had to be left vacant at the beginning of the play so that it could be occupied by Orestes later on. At the end of the chorus's report, he explicitly acknowledges his role: "I interpret [the dream] in such a way that it all fits" (1986:192; 542).

Two prominent actions are at stake in this statement: *krínō* (interpret) is used here probably for the first time in its sense of interpreting "an allegorical or symbolic dream", as Garvie points out, in consonance with Kessels

(1986:192). It thus clearly marks Orestes's appropriation of the empty place of the generic *krítai* (critics, interpreters) of line 37. Secondly, accompanying this critical gesture is Orestes's teleological reflection on his activity: "I interpret it so as to make it fit together", in a fairly literal translation. His spelling out of the purpose and manner of his hermeneutic act is reminiscent (or, less anachronistically, anticipates) Artemidorus's methodological remarks on dream interpretation quoted above as to "how each individual sign" has to fit "into the whole" in order to sustain a "judgement" which is as valid for "the total sum of the signs as [for] each individual sign" (1975:176; 1963,III,66). That is, within the conceptual universe of the *Choephoroi*, dreams are also regarded in linguistic terms -- they are a *lógos*, as repeatedly stressed³⁷ -- and their reading is seen as a semiological activity. In this sense, Orestes's interpretative work introduces order into the *akritómythos* dream the chorus "reports". He thus becomes, in a last analysis, the organising principle of this confusing (*akrítos*) *logos* (or *mythos*) which is Clytemnestra's dream, that is, he becomes its author.³⁸ In face of this author-function we have to correct the genitive of the last sentence: Orestes is the

³⁷ *Lógos* and its correlated forms are used three times between lines 521 and 528.

³⁸ I stress the usage of the notion of author as consonant with Foucault's definition of the term (1972:221) quoted above .

ultimate author of this dream.

This claim entails the reassessment of the statement made at the beginning of this section that the dream-scene is not dramatised but narrated on stage. In face of Orestes's (author-itarian) authorship it is legitimate to assert that the dream is "done" or "acted" (*dráō*)³⁹ on stage, rather than imitated by means of a narrative (*apangelías*). If Orestes becomes the author-protagonist, the chorus in their turn lose their quality of messenger (*ángelos*) to become supporting characters, or helpers, in Greimas's terminology (1966:178).

Orestes's poesis of the dream signs is characterised by a vivid metaphor, the adverbial form "*synkóllōs*", literally, "glued together". That is, his interpretation is such that it ensues a "fitting together" of the pieces/signs. The "glue" employed for this carpentry work⁴⁰ can be identified on the grounds of Aristotle's definition of the gist of this craft (*technē*; 1965:93; 464b6) called the interpretation of dreams, namely the recognition of similarities. The eye that observes (*theōrei*) these similarities should be the object of a distinction similar to the one made by narratology vis-à-vis the narrator and

³⁹ The modern word "drama" comes from the Doric form of this verb, i.e., *drân*.

⁴⁰ I derive this metaphor from Barthes's 1963 essay "What is Criticism?", in which he compares this practice to the work of a carpenter in the formal arrangement or joining together of a given amount of material (1992:259).

the focaliser. I refer to the Lacanian difference between the eye and the gaze.

In *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan indicates that in the field of vision (and of focalisation, I would stress) there is something "that escapes from the grasp of that form of vision that is satisfied in imagining itself as consciousness" (1981b:74). To this "underside of consciousness" (p.83) he gives the name of "gaze", whose "primal nature [and] essence" lies not in seeing -- which is a property of the eye -- but in showing (p.76). These two functions are at play in the domain of the spectacle, of the "*speculum mundi*" (Lacan, 1981b:75), and help us specify the nature of the "spectacle" (*ópsis*) which Aristotle defines in the *Poetics* as an essential part of tragedy: "and as it is through acting that the poets present their imitation, one first and necessary element of a tragedy is the arrangement of the spectacle [*óψεōς*]" (1958:12; 1449b31-33). The prominent position Aristotle grants the spectacular with is apparently contradicted later on in this treatise when he affirms that the ultimate tragic emotions of pity and fear "may result from the inner structure" of the plot, and moreover that this form constitutes a better and superior means of producing pity and fear (1911:49; 1453b1-3).

Aristotle's severe hierarchisation of the domains of the verbal (*mýthos*) and the visual (*ópsis*) has to be nuanced

first of all in semantic terms.⁴¹ As Taplin points out, the Greek *ópsis* oscillates between "what is seen" and an "outward show" (1977:39). This semantic ambiguity can be read in terms of the Lacanian distinction between the eye (what is seen) and the gaze (what is shown), and thus helps to mitigate Aristotle's privileging of the verbal. As the latter specifies, "the plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place" (1911:49; 1453b3-6). In other words, what Aristotle seems to be stressing here is the function of the gaze, of showing, which occupies a paramount position in the tragic discourse.

The scene of Clytemnestra's dream articulates in a spectacular *coup de théâtre* the question of the verbal and the visual to the one of the eye and the gaze, and thus makes Aeschylus worthy of Taplin's appraisal: "by far the most spectacular dramatist" (1977:39). As Orestes explicitly characterises, the dream is both "*lógos*" (528) and "*ópsanon*" (534; the Aeschylean variation of *ópsis*, according to Liddell and Scott, 1994). His Foucauldian authorship of this *logos* is strengthened when accrued of a psychoanalytic perspective. First of all, Orestes's *poiesis* reveals the

⁴¹ The question of the relationship between the visual and the verbal is a contending issue in the critical field of Greek tragedy (let alone culture). For a discussion of this problem I refer to, for example, Taplin's *Greek Tragedy in Action* (1978).

dimension of the eye in his depiction of himself as the snake that will draw blood from Clytemnestra's breast: "it is I that turn into a snake and slay her" (1970b:40; 549-50). On this level of the spectacle we have another of Orestes's specular *dédoublements*, another of the multiple identifications that mark his footprints in this play. He con-fuses himself with the serpent, a forceful topos in Greek mythology (Slater, 1992:75-122).

Parting company with Freud in his claim that snakes constitute "those most important symbols of the male organ" (1900:357), I would initially heed Artemidorus's oblique warning concerning the status of snakes in dreams. In Book 4 of the *Oneirocritica* he provides a list of seven different cases of women who dreamt that they had given birth to a serpent, and underlines the fact that each dream has its own particular outcome (1975:213; 1963,IV,67). Such differentiation corroborates both Artemidorus and Freud's postulations that dream interpretation should be conducted within the linguistic parameters set down by its narration, a procedure which is opposed to the a prioristic attribution of symbolic equivalences.

In the discourse of the *Oresteia*, and of the *Choephoroi* in particular, the serpent encompasses a multiplicity of references.⁴² In this play it joins together both life and

⁴² In the *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra is characterised as "*amphísbainan*" (1233), i.e., "a fabulous snake 'moving both ways'", according to the footnote of the translator of the Loeb edition

death, nourishment and annihilation, through the reversal of a kinship relation: the son who was given birth by the mother becomes the devourer of her life. Such reversal, I would argue, following Lévi-Strauss, ultimately rests on the question of origin and difference, especially sexual difference, or as the anthropologist phrases it, on "how one can be born from two" (1963:217). Orestes's figuration as the chthonic snake can be read as an attempt to provide a solution to this "original problem" (Lévi-Strauss, 1963:216). It forcefully resonates the problematic put forth by the mythical figure of Kékrops, the primordial autochthonic king of Athens, who was half man, half serpent. As Loraux points out, Kékrops presides over the transition from the savage to the civilised by "assembling men together in a city (*asti*)" and by instituting rules of interaction and exchange among them, chiefly marriage (1990:30). This regulating function from the "raw to the cooked" is redoubled by Orestes in the course of the trilogy. Important features are present in this *dédoublement*.

As Greek makes explicit, *auto-chthōn* means "sprung from the earth itself" (Liddell and Scott, 1994), that is a form

(1952:107). In the *Choephoroi*, Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are referred to by the chorus as "*duoîn drakōntoin*" (1047), as the "two serpents" (1952:263) whose heads Orestes will cut off. The Erinyes also join this bestiary. In the *Choephoroi*, Orestes calls them "*drákousin*" (1050), "serpents" (1952:263). In the *Eumenides* they are referred to as "*drakaínēs*" (128), "serpents" (1970c:19), by Clytemnestra's ghost. These various instances pose a strong textual resistance to a univocal reading of the snake symbol in the trilogy.

of conceptualising birth which excludes the female.⁴³ Orestes's identification with his autochthonic predecessors can, on the one hand, be taken as an exclusion of Clytemnestra as mother. Such a reading coalesces with the foundational Athenian myth of autochthony (Loraux, 1990:10), and thus inserts his matricide in a less transgressive frame. This question is addressed later in the play, when, in the imminence of being murdered, Clytemnestra evokes the bonds of *philía*, of kinship:

CLYTEMNESTRA

Hold, my son, and have respect, my child, for this breast, at which many a time in slumber have you sucked with your gums the milk that nourished you!

ORESTES

Pylades, what am I to do? Shall I respect my mother, and not kill her?

PYLADES

Where henceforth shall the oracles of Loxias declared at Pytho, and the covenant you pledged on oath? Count all men your enemies rather than the gods! (1970b:60; 896-899)

More than a seduction scene (e.g., Devereux, 1976) or a display of object-relations in which the breast plays the major role (e.g., Green, 1979), I would argue that this

⁴³ This disavowal of the presence of women in conception is particularly salient in the myth of the first Athenian citizen, Erichthonius, also serpent-shaped. His sexually-aroused father, Hephaestus, was pursuing Athena to have intercourse with her. In face of her refusal, his sperm fell onto the earth, and from it sprung Erichthonius. As regards the belief held by nineteenth-century German philology, in vogue until today, which equates the earth to women, I stress, with Loraux that the recourse to the earth is a procedure which aims at repairing "the denial of sexual intercourse" (1990:12). Furthermore, Loraux emphasises that "mythical thought knew both the earth and, since it was necessary, the woman. One does not replace the other" (1990:13).

agonistic encounter puts in relief the status of kinship relations⁴⁴ and ultimately the suppression of the mother from the question of origins. Kinship is metonymically made present through the breast, and is initially defined within the parameters of the sacred by both Clytemnestra and Orestes, as attested by the use they make of the verb *aídeomai* (*aídesai*, 896; *aidethō*, 899, respectively), that is "to stand in awe, fear, respect" (Liddell and Scott, 1994). In opposition to the awesome quality of the mother-son relation, Pylades, Orestes's double, introduces a higher, mythical level of relation that ensues the effacement of the former. Orestes's allies (identifies) himself with Apollo's oracle in the endeavour to efface the mother from the scene of procreation and lineage.⁴⁵

From another point of view, however, the poiesis of the dream reveals that Orestes's identification with chthonic elements takes place in a highly ambivalent terrain: between the waking state and the dream, between the logos and the *ópsis*, and within the oscillation of the latter. In this respect, then, what Orestes sees has to be interrogated beyond the limits of the waking eye, i.e., it has to be seen

⁴⁴ As Clytemnestra's emphatic use of "my son" (*ō paî*; 896) and "my child" (*téknōn*; 896) strongly indicates.

⁴⁵ This alliance presents an interesting case of parallelism and reversal. Apollo, besides being, like Orestes, paired with his sister Artemis, her twin, is the one who slays the serpent Python. In the case of the *Choephoroi*, rather than the killer of the serpent (Orestes), he is the one who will save it.

in light of the notion of the gaze.

As indicated above, the domain of dreams is intimately connected with the visual. Dreams produce images, *phantásmata*, in Aristotle's word (1965:93; 464b9), a phenomenon that escapes the realm of the waking eye. This distinction is stressed by Lacan: "in the so-called waking state, there is an elision of the gaze, and an elision of the fact that not only does it look, it also shows. In the field of the dream, on the other hand, what characterises the images is that it shows" (1981b:75; emphases in original). Indeed, Orestes's *phantásmata* have a lot to show. They are an *ópsis*, a spectacle that shows more than his specular identifications. It stages a derivative of the Greek *phántasma*, namely, the psychoanalytic *phantasy* or *imagination* (Freud, 1917:371).⁴⁶ According to Laplanche and Pontalis, "phantasies are... scripts (*scénarios*) of organised scenes which are capable of dramatisation -- usually in a visual form" (1988:318). Orestes's phantasmatic dream is this script, in which he accumulates the roles of author, protagonist (i.e., the one who dramatises or acts it) and ultimately its observer or spectator. This division of roles encompasses another dimension subsumed in the theatrical metaphor, namely the divided subject, engendered by means of prohibitions or repression, or in Lacanian

⁴⁶ It is worthy of note that both classical and late antiquity oneirocriticism move together with psychoanalysis within a similar semantic field: *phántasma*, image; *phantasía*, imagination.

terms, by the bar.

Pursuing the theatrical metaphor, Laplanche and Pontalis specify that "the primary function of phantasy... [is] the *mis-en-scène* in which what is *prohibited* (*l'interdit*) is always present in the actual formation of the wish" (1988:318; emphasis in original). The dream in the *Choephoroi* can be read as the staging of Orestes's desire, whose distorted expression is informed by the constraints laid upon by interdiction, as well as being a way of by-passing this very interdiction. The gaze that shows Orestes as a serpent devouring his mother renders visible his incestuous desire, a desire which informs the formation of what Freud denominates "primal phantasies",⁴⁷ which as Laplanche and Pontalis point out, aim to "provide a representation of and a 'solution' to what constitutes a major enigma to the child", i.e., the question of origins (1988:332).

These phantasies reveal the dialectic that informs the myth of autochthony: the removal of the mother conversely

⁴⁷ In Lecture XXIII of the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* Freud writes that "*primal phantasies*, as I would like to call them... are a phylogenetic endowment. In them the individual reaches beyond his own experience at points... [which] were once real occurrences in the *primaeval* times of the human family, and that children in their phantasies are simply filling in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth" (1917:371). I would claim that the a-historicism of the mythical fabula of the *Oresteia* (and of *Oedipus Rex*) substantially provide Freud with the "prehistoric truth" for the sort of construction he advances here. In these fabulae he finds the hermeneutic ground on which to read "all the things that are told to us to-day in analysis as phantasy" (1917:371).

stresses the desire for her which, due to its menacing effects to a given community, has to be severely repressed. As Freud remarked, "prohibitions must have concerned activities towards which there was a strong inclination" (1913:31).⁴⁸ Orestes's chthonic identifications follow this logic: while grounded on a repression of the maternal figure, they expose first and foremost the "strong inclination" he entertains towards the latter and, ultimately, the dialectical relation between desire and interdiction. Within this tension, the repressed returns in the phantasmatic form of the dream, which has condensation, or metaphor, as one of its major means of expression.

The constitution of this metaphoric articulation revolves around the semantic field of orality, as the repeated references to feeding, and especially to milk, attest. Orestes's abrupt change of focus, as I intimated above, from the telos of the dream to the kind of food the child was fed on sets down the first and one of the most significant signposts of this field. "What food did it desire, the newborn monster?" (1970b:39) ("*tínos borás chrēdzonta, neogenès dákos*;" (530). According to Liddell and Scott (1994), the Greek *borás* generally refers to the eating of meat, especially of "cannibal-like feasts", and rarely is

⁴⁸ It cannot go without notice that Freud himself produces a similar sort of repression of the mother figure in *Totem and Taboo*, insofar as this character, albeit pivotal in his plot, is only made present through the *jouissance* of the father and the desire of the sons.

used as simply "food". In his luminous essay "Hunt and Sacrifice in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*", Vidal-Naquet calls attention to the importance of this cannibalistic ritual in mythical thought and in particular in the trilogy. He identifies certain types of murders and sacrifices as a form of "family repast", or *oikeía borá*, and notices that "this term is usually used in connection with human eating when men are reduced to a savage state or compared to animals" (1988:153). Even though his major reference is Thyestes's (Aegisthus's father) eating of his children, who were served to him by his revengeful brother Atreus (Agamemnon's father), I would stress Orestes's inscription in this inheritance.

Metamorphosed into the polysemic snake, he will also perform an *oikeía borá*, i.e., the devouring⁴⁹ of his mother. This is the "telos and consummation" of the dream he so intensely seeks to get from the chorus (1952:211; 528). A consummation that springs from the desire of the newborn child. Again the Greek is revealing. In Orestes's question concerning this repast, the verb used is *chrēdzonta*, from *chrēdzō*, meaning "to need, want, desire" (Liddell and Scott, 1994). The range and complexities of this verb can be expounded within a psychoanalytic semantic. According to Lacan,

⁴⁹ *Borá* comes from the verb *bibrōskō*, i.e., to eat up, to devour.

le désir s'ébauche dans la marge où la demande se déchire du besoin: cette marge étant celle que la demande, dont appel ne peut être inconditionnel qu'à l'endroit de l'Autre, ouvre sous la forme du défaut possible qu'y peut apporter le besoin, de n'avoir pas de satisfaction universelle...

(1966:814; 1977:311)

The gap between the child's need (for food) and the impossibility of its total satisfaction opens up the space for desire to constitute itself not only as that which can never be satisfied, but also as ultimately entailing the quest for this absolute Other -- the Mother (Lacan, 1966:813; 1977:310) -- whose access is interdicted by what takes the name of incest prohibition or the Name-of-the-Father.

This prohibition can be further expounded in an anthropological light. According to Lévi-Strauss, "the regulation of relationships between the sexes represents an overflow of culture into nature, in another way sexual life is the beginning of social life in nature..." (1969:12). In this respect, then, the incest taboo for him "is at once on the threshold of culture, in culture, and... culture itself" (1969:12). This ambiguous terrain co-habited by the natural and the social, the animal and the human is redoubled by Orestes's ambivalent identity as man/snake, as *dákos* (line 530 quoted above). According to Liddell and Scott, *dákos* is generally "an animal of which the bite is dangerous" (1994), that is, yet another emphasis on the orality of the dream-scene and on the ambiguity between life and death which

presides over origins, especially over the genesis of this *neogenès* (530), whose task will be to solve this ambiguity between the savage and the civilised, which has been constitutive of his lineage since Atreus and Thyestes. The "trigenerational structure" (Goldhill, 1984:27) we saw in relation to Zeus's position in the *Agamemnon* is echoed here. As the third generation in a line of bestialised humans, Orestes is the "saving seed", the "*spérmatos sōtēriou*" (1952:183; 236), as Electra hails him earlier in the *Choephoroi*,⁵⁰ who will be able to set right "the cursed spite" of the Atridae. In a Lacanian vocabulary, he is the one (together with Electra, his double) in a position to invoke the Name-of-the-Father as the Third which can cut across the duality of specular and fused relations, thus rendering the Mother as the ultimate Other, whose inaccessibility enables the existence of desire (i.e., the desiring subject). This regulating function makes human interaction possible on the grounds of the interdiction it poses against the devouring act of the *oikeía borá*, which, as Vidal-Naquet underlines, "is *in summa* equivalent to incest" (1988:153).

The invocation of the Name-of-the-Father, however, is dialectically performed by Orestes. His incestuous desire, made manifest in his dream, is carried into effect in the

⁵⁰ Electra concludes this celebratory speech to Orestes by evoking "Zeus the third" "*tō trítō... Zēnī*" (1952:185; 244-45).

ob-scene through Clytemnestra's murder, i.e., through "the son's off-stage penetration of his mother's body with powerful sword", as Goldhill phrases it (1984:137). This ob-scene act ensues Orestes's madness at the end of the play:

"what are these fancies, O truest of all men to your father, that vex you?", is the chorus's amazed expression (1970b:71; 1051). In Lacanian terms, these fancies receive the name of "psychosis" and are characteristic of the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father: "*pour que la psychose se déclanche, il faut que le Nom-du-Père, 'verworfen', forclos, c'est à dire jamais venu à la place de l'Autre, y soit appelé en opposition symbolique au sujet*" (1966:577; 1977:217).

Orestes's "family repast" thus, while closing up the Law of the Father, strongly calls for and reaffirms its imperative existence. This is the logic of tragedy that Loraux identifies: the moment of its utmost transgression constitutes the law's most eloquent pronouncement (1987:30).

Psychosis is too confusing a state to be tenable, be it on an individual, social or textual level. The ob-scene "parrincest"⁵¹ committed in the course of the first pair of plays claims for a "third" to break through the specular structure that informs the relation between the *Agamemnon*

⁵¹ I take this neologism from Pietro Pucci's *Oedipus and the Fabrication of the Father* (1992:1). His condensation of these two primordial crimes -- parricide and incest -- seems to be a terse point made concerning their inextricable character, which I have attempted to suggest by means of the discussion of the various levels of specularity not only between the two plays but also, and foremost, within the *Choephoroi*.

and the *Choephoroi*, as well as Orestes's characterisation within the latter. This is the task to be performed by the *Eumenides*, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V - "FATHER, ... IN THAT NAME DOTH NATURE SPEAK":
NAMING THE LAW

*Cubramos... com um lençol de linho fino
o perfil hirto da nossa Imperfeição.*¹

Fernando Pessoa ("Na Floresta do
Alheamento")

Introduction

Upon the final play of the trilogy bears the weight of the psychotic legacy left by the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi*. The echoes of the chorus's exodus in the latter are still resonant when we come to the *Eumenides*: "now thirdly has there come from somewhere a deliverer -- or shall we say a doom?" (1970b:72). This question tersely gives vent to the chaos, to the Symbolic crisis that was woven in the course of the first two plays. Orestes, the third of his lineage, paradoxically conflates the epithets of saviour, *sōter* (Ch., 1073) and of bringer of doom and destruction, i.e., *móron* (Ch., 1074). This oxymoron replicates the problem advanced by Electra at the beginning of the second play: is their saviour, god or mortal, a judge or an avenger, a *dikastēn* or a *dikēphóron* (Ch., 120)? More than the status and role of Orestes in the trilogy, what seems to be at stake here is

¹ "Let us cover up, with a thin linen sheet, the taut profile of our Imperfection".

the existence of two notions of Dike (the noun which gives the radical of the two qualifiers above), and furthermore their irreconcilability within the tragic language of the *Oresteia*.

The structure of this semantic conflict is put in relief in the *Choephoroi* when Orestes declares that: "for though a man pour out all he has in atonement for one life taken -- in vain is his labour; thus goes the saying" (1970b:39), or as the Greek more forcefully expresses: "*hōd' échei lógos*" (Ch., 521). That is, this notion of Dike, of blood for blood, is grounded on a logic (logos) which regulates not only blood relations, but an entire socio-symbolic fabric.

This logos however is far from being monolithic: the ambiguities that characterise it are systematically stressed in the course of the first two plays, as I have demonstrated, and find in Orestes's statement one of its most emblematic instances. The indelible quality of a bloody deed Orestes stresses refers retrospectively to Clytemnestra, while anticipating and problematising his imminent crime. Oblivious of this logos, he contrives a "simple telling" (1952:215), "*haploûs ho mýthos*" (Ch., 554) that enables his act of revenge. Even if the philosophical dichotomy between logos and mythos is not in effect in Aeschylus's language, Orestes's opposition to the powerful logos he announces and supports by means of a "simple and

unambiguous tale" cannot but be taken as a case of tragic irony. This mythos is anything but simple: its plot is the outcome of his dream-interpretation, i.e., of his desire,² and its utmost telos is an incestuous matricide. In other words, the effort to construct and insert a mythos in a logos that is so antagonistic to it will a *minima* provoke an acute crisis, and in a last analysis demand a reconceptualisation of this logos.

This in brief is the inherited background of the *Eumenides* and the major conflict which this third in a dramatic lineage has to solve. As I have indicated in the previous chapters, this ordinal "third" concerns primarily a topos, a position, rather than a quantitative scale. In this sense, my analysis of the resolution this play proposes will focus on the different topoi (as places) that are traversed by the characters as well as by the spectators and readers of this "drama of logos", as Goldhill rightfully calls it (1986:3).

From Argos to Delphi

By the end of the *Choephoroi*, the conflict has overflowed the boundaries of the domestic, of the *dōmos*, to affect the entire city, *polis*. As the chorus points out to Orestes,

² One of the names Greek has for desire is *erōs*, an entity which, as Sappho reminds us, is a weaver of myths, a *mythóplokos* (frag. 19).

"you have liberated the whole state of Argos" (1970b:71), the *Argeiōn pólin* (Ch., 1046). This liberation, however, paradoxically constitutes a breach of the rules of the *logos* in effect in Argos (and not only) forbidding parricide and incest, whose major actant can be condensed in the figure of Orestes. Stained with these crimes, the latter is alienated from his wits *and* from his polis. Thus he is urged by the chorus to go to Delphi, to the sacred temple of Apollo, the one and only source from which he can get his purification: "*heîs soî katharmós*" (Ch., 1059).

Both Orestes and we are driven to Delphi in the expectation of finding in this topos its announced kathartic, pacifying quality. Indeed, the *Eumenides* opens in what can be taken as a harmonious tone, with Apollo's priestess evoking the peaceful concord among the gods. For Kitto, "the first scene, laid before Apollo's temple in Delphi, establishes a mood of dignity, calm and beauty" (1970:87). This divine harmony, I would contend, rests on the stifling of conflictual situations. First of all, this "calm and beauty" befalls onto certain gods only, notably the Olympian, and thus excludes deities, such as the chthonic and more primordial ones, also present in the trilogy. Secondly, the concord portrayed in the priestess's speech whitewashes Apollo's inheritance of the oracle in terms of a gift of his grandmother Phoebe, insofar as the common knowledge of the myth held that his possession of the

sanctuary was the outcome of a strife, as Kitto himself notices (1970:87). In this re-elaboration (or denial) of the struggle I find one of the major points of tension of this apparently panegyric piece.

Ever since the *Agamemnon*, there are conspicuous signs that Apollo's name is to be taken within symbolic parameters. Cassandra's punning on his name as god of roads, and destroyer is one such sign: "Apollo, Apollo (Ápollon)! God of the Ways (*aguiâta*),³ my destroyer (*apóllōn emós*)" (*Ag.*, 1952:91; 1080-81). In mythical discourse in general, one of Apollo's most commonly used names is Phoebus. According to the priestess's proem in the *Eumenides*, this name was given to him, together with the oracle, as a "birth-gift" (1952:273) by his grandmother Phoebe, via Apollo's mother, Themis. In a footnote to her referential study on the *Oresteia*, Lebeck points out that "giving gifts and name to a newborn child were both features of the Attic *amphidrómia* [encompassing, enclosing]... However, the child was usually named after the grandfather, not the grandmother..." (1971:207). The Greek *amphidrómia* bears some similarities to the Lacanian notion of the inscription into the Symbolic: in both the paternal lineage is in charge of bestowing the child with a name, a highly symbolic act

³ According to Denniston-Page's commentary of the play, *aguiâta* refers to "the symbol of Apollo standing at the palace gates... The function of 'Apollo of the Street' seems to have been to protect the passage to and from men's houses" (1968:167).

through which the child is assigned a place within the frame of sexual difference, as well as in the broader spectre of the social fabric. In other words, the act of enclosing a child with a name ties together language, sexuality, and sociality. The priestess's enhancement of Apollo's matrilineal descent constitutes an antinomy to the paternal prerogative. Similarly to Orestes, the god is alienated from the Name-of-the-Father, an alienation which enables us to see the latter as another redoubling of the former. (This similarity can help explain his oracular commands to the former to kill his mother, or as Goldhill phrased it, "to penetrate his mother's body with sword" (1984:137), as well as the god's unconditional support to him).

However, Apollo's bondage with the maternal line, like Orestes's devious access to the mother as "the fruit of enjoyment" (Žižek, 1991:24), is also immersed in the ambiguous logos which characterises the trilogy. As the priestess indicates, he is also "*Diòs prophētēs d'esti Loxías patrós*" (19), an intricate syntax whose complexities are undone in translation: "Loxias is the spokesman of his father Zeus" (1970c:12).⁴ In a somewhat free translation, I would render this sentence as "Loxias speaks in the name of

⁴ Alan Sommerstein, the editor and commentator of one of the most recent editions of the *Eumenides*, calls our attention to "the word-order" of this clause, "at once 'nested' and 'chiastic': the name and description of Zeus enclose the description and name of Apollo which in turn enclose the verb" (1989:83). I read this syntactic enclosure as sustaining the bondage between father and son.

the Father, Zeus", and emphasise the understated comment made by the choice of this particular epithet of the god: Loxias comes from *loxós*, i.e., ecliptic, ambiguous, slant, and signals the obscurity of the god's oracles. Apollo Loxias, Apollo the Ambiguous, thus epitomises the conflict at the fulcrum of the *Eumenides*, namely, the amalgamation with the utmost Other, the Mother -- the disastrous consequences of which we have already seen in his double, Orestes -- while being, *qua* prophet, subjected to the word of this other Other, the Father. From the point of view of the Lacanian triad (Real, Symbolic, and Imaginary, or RSI), Apollo's ambiguous or conflictual status enhances the problematic articulation of the Imaginary and the Symbolic. This binary relation, however, is not exhaustive. As I have indicated before, the triadic structure is fundamental not only for Lacan, but for the tragic discourse in general, and for the *Oresteia* in particular: Zeus is not the only Third, ("*trítō... Zēni*"; Ch. 184), but so is Orestes, as the chorus indicates twice at the end of the *Choephoroi*.

Apollo's oracular heritage brings to the fore the third element of the triad: the Real. An oracle, Lacan reminds us, "*confère à l'autre réel son obscure autorité*" (1966:808; 1977:306). In other words, oracles enable us to descry the obscure Real, or, more accurately, to see its obscurity. In another *coup de théâtre*, Aeschylus gives us a glimpse of the Real, which, by definition, resists symbolisation.

After her laudatory introduction, the priestess goes into the temple, to what the oracular architecture designated as *opisthódomos*. As I have noticed in the introduction to Part II of this dissertation, such a place, reserved to the priestess, was located at the further back of the temple. In terms of the triadic structure of the Greek stage which informs my analysis, the Pythia goes to the *opisō-skēnion*. Her entrance (or exit), leaves the stage empty, a device which, Taplin observes, "is unique in surviving Greek tragedy, which generally abhors a vacuum, and nearly always preserves continuity" (1977:362). I would argue that this horrifying vacuum is the theatrical outcome of the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father carried out in the "parrincest", and, furthermore, that it theatrically intimates what Lacan calls "*un trou du réel*" (a hole of/in the Real; 1975/76: 49). Such momentary vacuum, "trou", is utterly disruptive of the sustaining grammar of (theatrical) language and thus cannot be endured.⁵ However brief its theatrical realisation might be, this silent emptiness is the closest we can get to the horror the priestess experiences in the ob-scene and which she is about to report upon her return to the proscenium: "Horrible! Horrors to relate, horrors for my eyes to behold" (1952:275) ("*ē deinà léxai, deinà d'ophthalmoîs drakeîn*"; 34).

⁵ In fact in his unpublished *Séminaire XXIII: Le Sinthome*, Lacan acknowledges that the notion itself of the Real "*n'est pas une idée qui se soutienne*".

Long before Lacan, Aeschylus defines the Real as resistant to the dimensions of the logos and of the *ópsis*, that is, of symbolisation. The adjective *deinós* the priestess uses in her attempt to convey (capture) this Real carries some of its unsustainable quality. Besides the idea of horror, dread, terror, *deinós* also refers to something marvelous, strange (Liddell and Scott, 1994), of what exceeds the limits of the ordered and the known. This element of excess brings surreptitiously into the scene the divine figure who incarnates excess *par excellence*: Dionysus.⁶ Similarly to Apollo's names, one of the former's epithets suffices, for the moment, to support this characteristic. According to Gernet, Dionysus was popularly described as "*esphydōmenos*, the 'stuffed one'" (1981:15-16).

Thus, in addition to the ambiguous Apollo, the one who is Phoebus and Loxias, light and obscurity, we have now the in(tru)clusion, in the god's temple, of the horrifying excess that accompanies Dionysus.⁷ This excess marks the

⁶ Dionysus is notably known as the patron god of all theatrical practices. The connection between the theatrical and the excessive will be explored in the course of this discussion.

⁷ This co-habitation of Apollo and Dionysus, rather than reinforcing the dichotomy between the two gods which grounds Nietzsche's influential study on Greek tragedy, seems to stress the difficulties of polarising the two deities in terms of "the sapient tranquillity of the plastic god" (1956:21) and the "rapture" and "physical intoxication" (1956:22) ensued by Dionysus. I should add that Nietzsche's version of "the birth of tragedy" is a highly polemic issue in classical scholarship. For a concise and less passionate discussion of this controversy I refer to Geoffrey Arnott's "Nietzsche's View of Greek Tragedy" (1984).

difference between the Dionysian and the Apollinean ambiguity. The former is sexually and ethnically ambivalent: at the same time that he is male, he also bears female features; besides being a Greek deity, he is this foreign other, the *xénos* who unsettles the Greek land by spreading "the omnipotence of [his] *manía*" (Vernant and Vidal Naquet, 1991:41).

The priestess returns to the proscenium touched by this *manía*,⁸ and thus performs a mantic function, namely that of revealing to the audience the frenzy that can result from this "*trou du réel*" she has experienced, suffered (*patheîn*). She returns to the proscenium, to the embarrassment of some commentators, "on all fours".⁹ On the verge of the burlesque (anticipating not only Aristophanes but also some of Euripides), such a posture echoes the shattering of the chorus in the *Agamemnon*. As in the latter case, the priestess's "*deísasa*" (38) (i.e. her state of being overwhelmed by *deinós*) expresses, on the somatic level, the shattering effects the sight of this *deinós* can have. The

⁸ It should be noted that prophetic practice in general is not immune to *manía*. As E.R. Dodds points out, Socrates distinguishes in the *Phaedrus* four kinds of divine madness: "1) prophetic madness, whose patron god is Apollo; 2) telestic madness, whose patron is Dionysus; 3) poetic madness, inspired by the Muses; 4) erotic madness, inspired by Aphrodite and Eros" (1951:64). The priestess's *manía* in this particular case seems far from the prophetic type and closer to the Dionysian.

⁹ In the comments of his translation of the trilogy, Lloyd-Jones, for example, remarks that "the ancient commentary on the play interprets this [line 37] as meaning that Pythia is on all fours. But it may mean that her hands are trembling" (1970c:14).

old woman that she is is turned into a child: "for an aged woman, overcome with fright, is a thing of naught... she is but a child" (1952:275) "*deísasa gâr graûs oudén, antípais mèn oûn*"; 38). In such blurring of the borders that establish and contain (the priestess's) identity one can clearly distinguish the traits of the Dionysian *manía*.

This dramatic technique tersely puts in relief the nature of this *deínós* thing. Like a messenger, who most often ignores the implications of the news he bears, the priestess attempts to put into a *logos* the scene she had previously recognised as resistant to verbalisation: Orestes's blood-dripping hands and sword, and "the monstrous regiment of women", the Erinyes.¹⁰ The uncanniness of these figures, particularly the latter, turns the priestess "on all fours". In Taplin's words, "not even the Pythia's body can cope with this new horror, let alone her mind" (1977:363). Her regressive crawling makes Apollo's presence more than necessary: "the outcome now must be the care of the master of this house, the mighty Loxias himself" (1970c:15). That is to say that the magnitude of her

¹⁰ This notorious expression is part of the title of a pamphlet -- "The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women" -- by the sixteenth-century Scottish protestant reformer, John Knox. Aeschylus in fact is more subtle than Knox. The priestess's exact description of the Erinyes is "the wondrous regiment of women" ("*thaumastòs lóchos... gynaikōn*"; 46-7). It should be noted, however, that albeit the more positive nuances implicit in *thaumastós*, it is not distant from *deínós* insofar as both apply to things that escape the common measure, i.e., extraordinary things. In such excess we can find another trace of Dionysus's presence.

traumatic experience has placed this interpreter of verbal messages outside the limits of signification, of language. This psychotic state calls for the one who bears the word of the father, i.e., it reinforces the need for the Name-of-the-Father to be instated.

Apollo's required presence constitutes a step up in the hierarchical order the *Eumenides* will follow. From the mortal priestess, the regulating sceptre is passed on to the Olympian Apollo, who is to preside over an equally higher degree of convolution: the eruption of the ob-scene onto the proscenium. However, as I have previously discussed, the poetic and psychoanalytic stakes of this intrusion are too high and hence require a more detailed discussion of the ob-scene made ob-vious.

The first point to be interrogated concerns Apollo's position as the major purifier, as a *kathársios* (63).¹¹ This new epithet can be unproblematically articulated with one of his two previously appointed names. Apollo *Kathársios* goes *pari passu* with the Luminous (Phoebus). The same, however, does not hold true for Apollo the Ambiguous (Loxias). This disjunction is augmented in face of the first half of the priestess's speech discussed above, as well as

¹¹ In his commentary on this line of the *Eumenides*, Sommerstein calls attention to "Apollo's role as a prime authority in matters concerning pollution and its removal" (1989:92). Corroborating Apollo's cathartic powers, George Thomson, one of the most influential commentators on the *Oresteia*, remarks that "the road which the Athenians built for Apollo was the *hierà hodós* [the road to cure]..." (1966:191).

her invocatory words: it is Loxias who is summoned to occupy the hegemonic position in Orestes's purification, as well as to confront the horrendous Real.

Horror, *manía*, purification, the semantic parameters of the end of the *Choephoroi*, are still prevalent in the Delphic scene. Furthermore, they are at the fulcrum of the tragic language. The telos of tragedy, announced Aristotle in the second most quoted line of the *Poetics*,¹² is the purification of the *pathēmata* (suffering, experience) of pity and fear, of *éleos* and *phóbos* (1911:23; 1449b27-28).¹³ Apollo's position vis-à-vis the conflict incarnated by Orestes is of a similarly teleological nature: his aim is also to purify the *manía* and horror to which Orestes is subjected. In addition to the distinctive trait the chorus attributes to the god in the *Choephoroi* ("heîs soi *katharmós*"; 1059), his opening words in the *Eumenides* clearly state this position: "No! I will not abandon thee. Thy guardian to the end, close by thy side, or even far removed, I will not show me gentle to thine enemies" (1952:277) ("oútoi prodōsō. dià télous dé soi phúlax engūs *parestōs kai prós d'apostatōn echthroîsi toîs soîs ou*

¹² The first place goes, of course, to "tragedy is the imitation of an action..." (1911:23; 1449b24).

¹³ The view of *katharsis* as the telos of tragedy is also upheld by Elizabeth Belfiore, in her thorough examination of the fundamental notions on which rests the Aristotelian definition of tragedy (1992, in particular pp.257-90). Belfiore also acknowledges that such view is partaken by a number of scholars (1992:258).

genēsomai pépōn"; 64-66). This vow, in *summa*, entwines Apollo Katharsios and Apollo Teleios; that is, the purpose (telos) of his intervention in the play is Orestes's purification.

Such authoritative position, however, is undermined in this very speech. The god's combative attitude towards Orestes's enemies ends in nothing more than setting them to sleep (67-70), and warning his *protégé* that "they will drive you over all the wide mainland, striding ever over the earth you tread in your wanderings, and beyond the sea and seagirt cities" (1970c:16; 75-77). In other words, Apollo's masterly position as healer of pollution is severely put into question. In fact, no purification rite takes place in the scene of the Delphic temple, as Philip Vellacott has noticed (1984:40).¹⁴ Instead, the god directs Orestes to "the city of Pallas" (79), in order to be purified.¹⁵ This means that the conflict and its resolution are pushed a second step up the hierarchical ladder of deities. Like the Pythia, Apollo

¹⁴ Orestes's purification is a controversial issue among scholars. Lloyd-Jones, for example, subscribes to the idea that some form of purification has in fact taken place: "the blood [in Orestes's hands] is presumably the pig's blood used by Apollo to purify Orestes" (1970c:14). Given the importance of the act of purification, as well as Aeschylus's masterly stagecraft, I find it difficult to accept that this *kátharsis*, had it happened, should not have been enacted, nor even explicitly alluded to in the text.

¹⁵ In spite of being "the god of roads", Apollo abdicates from this capacity and evokes Hermes (the messenger-god, whose major function is to mediate the passage from life to death), to guide and protect Orestes's journey to Athens. As with Cassandra, Apollo fails a second time.

is also rendered powerless to deal with this agonistic situation. Such an impossibility is only consistent with the ambiguous (Loxias) portrayal the priestess offers us concerning his bondage with the maternal line and his subjection to the word of the Father. Furthermore, it augments the complexities of the very agon that structures the play (and the trilogy) insofar as not even the purifier *par excellence* can solve it.

"The Monstrous Regiment"

"The fiasco at Delphi",¹⁶ likewise, throws light onto another set of characters of the ob-scene Real-- the obscure Erinyes -- as well as onto the relation between the ob-scene and the proscenium, between the Real and the Symbolic. In the priestess's tentative depiction of them, the Erinyes come out as something of the order of the Dionysian *deinós*: "...women, seated upon chairs. Not women, but Gorgons...; not even to the shape of Gorgons can I compare them... I have not seen the tribe this company belongs to, nor the land that can boast to breed this race [*génos*]..." (1970c:15). Like Dionysus, the Erinyes unsettle the parameters that ground sexual difference, ethnicity (*génos*)

¹⁶ This parodic title for a Hollywood-like version of this episode (or the play) is not entirely gratuitous. As Lebeck argues, parody is one of the stylistic traits of the *Eumenides* (1971:134-44).

and, moreover, what human "reason ever comprehends". Rather than holding reason together (com-prehend), they cause the disruption of reason (*phrēn*), as suggested at the end of the *Choephoroi*: "the cause of the disorder that assails [Orestes's] wits" (1952:263) ("*ek tōndé toi taragmōs es phrénas pítnei*"; *Ch.*, 1056). The aggravating factor now is that, if in the second play these hideous figures were the object of Orestes's delirious fancy, in the *Eumenides* their monstrous existence receives the public and religious sanction of the Pythia (Goldhill, 1984:210-11).

This exceeding monstrosity, however, is unrealised (and unrealisable) on the Symbolic level of the proscenium. When the ob-scene comes forth, the Erinyes are asleep... Such anti-climatic appearance has stirred a century-old controversy concerning the actual moment of their entrance.¹⁷ Taplin, for example, argues that their entrance has to be postponed until 140ff (1977:369-74). Even though this discussion can bring relevant imports to the understanding of the text, I would claim that it bypasses a more fundamental question, namely, the very entrance of the ob-scene Erinyes into the proscenium, bearing in mind the limits and possibilities set up by Greek theatrical conventions.

As it is well-known, realism, as an aesthetic principle

¹⁷ In his *The Stagecraft of Aeschylus*, Taplin identifies the first instance of this debate in 1896 (1977:369). In the subsequent pages he provides a well-documented summary of it.

of theatre production, does not come into vogue until the second half of the nineteenth century (and even so with severe limitations). Fully aware that "this wooden O" could not possibly contain "the vast fields of France", Shakespeare exhorted his audiences to "make imaginary puissance:/ Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them/ Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth..." (*Henry V*, I, i). Shakespeare's plea puts in relief a *sine qua non* condition of the theatrical event: the audience's participation in the production, by precisely producing images, images which can articulate the unavoidable gap between the ob-scene and the proscenium, the Real and the Symbolic. These images can be thought of in terms of the Platonic notion of *eîdos*, i.e., to a "suprasensible reality" dissociated from the outward, unstable, appearance of phenomena (Peters, 1967:46-51). In the *Republic*, Plato remarks that "they [the students of geometry] make use of the visible forms [*eîdesi*] and talk about them, though they are not thinking of them, but of those things of which they are a likeness..." (1961:746; 1987, 510d).

This beyond the materiality of sight and sound that Shakespeare requires, and the Platonic *eîdos* supports, finds a correlate in the Lacanian Imaginary. As the latter writes in the "R/S/I" seminar, "*l'eîdos* traduit très bien ce que j'appelle l'imaginaire, puisque ça veut dire l'image" (1975/76:19). The mediation the Imaginary performs in the

theatrical experience is poetically summarised in Maurice Blanchot's essay "Two Versions of the Imaginary":

...the image fills one of its functions, which is to pacify, to humanize the unformed nothingness pushed towards us by the residue of being that cannot be eliminated. It cleans it up, appropriates it, ... and allows us to believe, in the heart of the happy dream which art too often permits, that at a distance from the real, and immediately behind it, we are finding... the transparent eternity of the unreal." (1981:79-80).

Aeschylus's introduction of the Erinyes into the Symbolic proscenium relies on the intervention of this sort of Imaginary. The suprasensible Reality of these horrendous figures can only find a place in the Symbolic proscenium if the audience can treat them as *eîdos*. The Furies' sleepiness, I would suggest, aims at providing a support for this sort of intervention. It is only through this "humanized" *eîdos* that the Real monsters can be put to sleep, pacified, and thus accommodated into the domain of representation. This does not mean that the horror that lies in the Real of the image, i.e., behind the skene, should disappear, but rather that it is possible to acknowledge its ex-istence. The *eîdos* given to this "unformed nothingness" that is woman and not woman, to these monsters that are beyond the known *génos* of monsters, enables characters and audience to behold what would otherwise have to remain stifled in the ob-scene, forever "blow[ing] forth fearsome blasts" (*Eu.*, 1952:277; 53). The menacing effects of this polluted breadth are not only undesirable but, moreover,

antithetical to the telos of tragedy, that is, katharsis (*Poetics*, 1449b 24-28). After all, that is why we are at Delphi (and ultimately at the theatre).

As discussed before, the domain of the visible, of the spectacle (and the *speculum*) is fundamental to the tragic language. The visible access to the *eîdos* of the *deînai* Erinyes is made possible by a device of the order of the Lacanian Imaginary that the Greeks knew how to use with expertise: the mask, the *prósōpon*.¹⁸ Aeschylus fully explores the polysemy the Greek (theatrical) language offers him. In addition to "mask", the most general meaning of the word is "face". The real (and Real) face, which the mask tries to intimate with the complicity of the audience's "Imaginary puissance", as Shakespeare perspicaciously understood, is accrued of a third important element (or meaning of *prósōpon*), namely the "character", which comes into being in the domain of the Symbolic representation. It is through this ambiguous interplay of Real, Imaginary, and Symbolic dimensions of the *prósōpon*, which concomitantly makes visible and hides, that the horror of the Erinyes can make its way from the ob-scene to the proscenium, and can become "persons" (a fourth meaning of the word).

Their status as persons, however, is severely

¹⁸ For an insightful discussion of the mask in Greek theatre, I refer to Vernant and Vidal-Naquet's *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece* (1991), in particular to two chapters: "Features of the Mask in Ancient Greece" and "The Masked Dionysus of Euripides' *Bacchae*".

questioned in Apollo's opening speech. In his words, they are "gray virgins, ancient maidens, with whom no god nor any among men nor any beast has intercourse" (1970c:16). The expression Lloyd-Jones renders as "gray virgins, ancient maidens" is yet another philological controversy, and, in the context of my analysis, another sign that other issues are also at stake.

The Loeb edition (1952) has "*graîai palaiaî paîdes*" (69), a form also adopted by Goldhill (1984:212). A different form is provided by both Thomson (1966) and Sommerstein (1989): "*graîai palaiópaides*" (69). The former holds that "*graîai palaiaî paîdes* is scarcely tolerable" (1966:193); while the latter stresses that "the paradox [of this expression] will not do" (1989:95). The "paradox" in question -- old women and children -- includes the hyperbolic use of the notion of "old". *Graîa* and *palaia* both mean "old, aged", with the subtle nuance that the latter also carries the idea of ancient (Liddell and Scott, 1994). Two similar adjectives to qualify *paîdes*, children, an excessive paradox. Aeschylus's poetic density is so unanimously acknowledged that it becomes difficult to dismiss this repetitiveness as "intolerable".¹⁹ I would

¹⁹ In his more recent and accessible study of the *Oresteia*, Goldhill remarks that "the poetry with which every scene and every chorus is composed is remarkably dense and remarkably complex in its cumulative effects. Almost any passage could be chosen to highlight the texture of what is some of the most extraordinary dramatic poetry ever written..." (1992:81).

claim that the cumulative use of *graîa* and *palaiá* is a linguistic reinforcement of the position the Erinyes are made to occupy in the *Oresteia* in general, and in the *Eumenides* in particular: they are old deities, belonging to an ancient past, to a *logos* which holds that blood has to be paid with blood. This ancient *logos*, to which Orestes and Apollo still contradictorily subscribe,²⁰ has to be superseded by a new Olympian one, of the Athenian polis.

The very paradox of old/young, of *graîai palaiai paîdes*, renders clear that there is more at play here than a generational conflict. This polemic expression is an appositive clause of "these loathsome maidens" (1952:279), "*hai katáptystoi kórai*" (68). The Erinyes are loathsome because they present an "intolerable paradox" not only in respect to age, but also to sexuality. As Apollo has remarked, they have not had any sort of intercourse²¹ with whichever type of being of the three domains -- the divine, the human, and the bestial -- that interact in the trilogy. Coming from Loxias, however, such a sentence (in both its judgmental and grammatical senses) has to be taken in its

²⁰ Among the many examples of this adherence to be found in the *Choephoroi*, there is Orestes's reference to Apollo's oracle which commands him to "take vengeance on those guilty of the murder, after the same fashion bidding me take life for life" (1970b:24; 273-74).

²¹ The English "intercourse" keeps the polysemy of the Greek verb *meígnutai* (69) (from *mígnumi*), which means, generally, to have contact with, to join, as well as to have sexual intercourse (Liddell and Scott, 1994).

ambiguous resonances.

Their status as *kórai*, as virgins, clearly marks their exclusion from the regulated forms of sexual activity. That is to say, they have not gone through the fundamental initiatory ritual -- that finds in marriage its most institutionalised form -- which transforms the sexually undefined *kórē* into the socially required *gynē* (woman). Such ritual, as Vernant expounds (1988:15-29), is presided over by Ártemis, Apollo's twin sister, who also inhabits an ambiguous space, i.e., the savage and the civilised. One of her functions is to conduct *kóroi* (boys) and *kórai* into clearly differentiated social spaces and functions: the former are to be integrated into the civic order as soldiers-citizens, and the latter as wives-mothers. In the light of Vernant's remarks, we have another facet of the "intolerable" oxymoron raised by philology about the virginal Erinyes: they are too old to remain outside the limits of civic domesticity.

Apollo's sententious comment brings about yet another dimension of "the monstrous regiment". By this moment in the trilogy, these "furious" *kórai* have already had many forms of intercourse with gods and humans, including Apollo himself. In the *Choephoroi*, Orestes reminds himself and the chorus that his revenge is required by Apollo, who "spoke of other assaults of the Erinyes, brought about by the shedding of my father's blood" (1970b:24; 283-84). In the *Agamemnon*,

Cassandra signals their presence within the House of the Atridae since its "primal sin" (1952:103), its "*prōtarchon átē*" (Ag., 1192). This *átē* refers immediately to Thyestes's adultery with Atreus's wife, but also to a more primordial sin, which Aeschylus significantly marks as *prōtarchon*, i.e., something of the order of the "first beginning" (Liddell and Scott, 1994), of origins.

The genesis of the Erinyes is of such an order. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod tells us that they are born from the blood that fell onto the earth when Cronus cut off his father's (Uranus) genitals (1929:91-93; 154-185).²² From this blood emerge "the mighty Erinyes", "*Erinÿs... krateràs*" (184), who are to rule (*krateîn*) over crimes committed against kinship ties.²³ In other words, while making sure that such crimes do not go unpunished, their rule (*krátos*) is a constant reminder of this original, primordial crime and, moreover, of the possibility of its reoccurrence. In this sense, the emphatic casting of the Erinyes into a hyperbolic past (*graíai palaiaí*) can be viewed as an attempt to repress not only their imminent presence, but also the traces left by this primordial crime.

²² As I have noted before, Freud's myth of the primordial horde in *Totem and Taboo* is evocative of this mythical crime: the voracious Uranus is murdered by his son, Cronos, in order to allow the latter (and his brotherhood) to live (to enjoy).

²³ This is ultimately the rule that is at stake in the trilogy. The identification of this *archē* (as origin and sovereignty) with matriarchy is a *minima* puzzling in feminist readings of the play.

Apollo's emphasis on the old and ancient quality of the Erinyes' rule finds resonance in a much later logos, i.e., psychoanalysis, especially in Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. Freud recognises that there are certain "tendencies *beyond* the pleasure principle, that is, ... tendencies more primitive than it and independent of it" (1920g:17; emphasis in original). These tendencies are later identified as "at once the most important and the most *obscure* element of psychological research" (1920g:34; emphasis added). Freud calls such an element "*Trieb*", "drive",²⁴ and acknowledges that "it must be of an *old* state of things" (1920g:38; emphasis in original). This ancient quality is emphasised in its conservative aspect: "all [drives]", writes Freud, "tend towards the restoration of an earlier state of things" (1920g:37). I would claim that the obscure, old Erinyes, who grow so prominent in the mythical discourse of the *Oresteia*, can be viewed as anticipating such a fundamental notion of the modern (mythical) language of psychoanalysis.²⁵ Freud asserts that the drives are "representatives of all the forces originating in the interior of the body..." (1920g:34). Exactly the same depiction can be made of the Erinyes if we substitute Freud's "interior of the body" by the vocative

²⁴ Not instinct, as the *Standard Edition* problematically renders it.

²⁵ Lacan holds that the drive is one of the "four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis" (1981b).

used by Clytemnestra's ghost: "goddesses of the under world" ("katà chthonòs theaí", 115). Like the drives, the Erinyes are these obscure "forces", whose power cannot be fully apprehended, curbed, neither by the Olympian gods, nor by the Olympic discourse of psychoanalysis. An implicit acknowledgment of this parallel can be found in Lacan's "*Du Trieb de Freud*", where he asserts that "*les pulsions sont nos mythes*" (1966:853).²⁶

The comparison of the Erinyes to the drives adds a new dimension to the old/new agon they establish with Apollo. They insist with the god: "young as you are, you have ridden us down, aged divinities" (1970c:20; 150). "Ride down", or "over-run with horse" (Liddell and Scott, 1994) is indeed an appropriate rendering of *kathippásō* (150) and signals to what is also at stake in the struggle between the young (*néos*) Apollo and the aged (*gráias*) Erinyes. In addition to being ancient, the Erinyes are also pictured as belonging to the animal domain. The struggle, thus, also entails the domestication of the primordial, "uncivilised" deities.²⁷

²⁶ I should stress, though, that Lacan objects to an understanding of the drives as primal forces. In *Seminar XI*, he writes that "there seems to be... a reference to some ultimate given, something archaic, primal. Such a recourse, which my teaching invites you to renounce if you are to understand the unconscious, seems inevitable here" (1981b:162). In the following page, however, he admits that "[Freud] says that the drive belongs to our myths" (1981b:163).

²⁷ This aspect of the Erinyes finds an echo in a much later, and equally prominent, deity: Dionysus. As Gernet observes, this god has a "direct link with the world of nature, especially its wild and uncivilized side" (1981:67).

However, given Apollo's ambiguous status -- in particular his subscription to the primal (*prōtarchos*) logos the Erinyes stand for, which calls for "blood for blood" -- he is rendered powerless to fully carry this "taming" task into effect. The most he can do is to put them to sleep.²⁸

The Furies' entrance into the proscenium, asleep, is yet another fecund theatrical recourse deployed by Aeschylus. On the one hand it suggests the possibility of their (temporary) appeasement, and thus mitigates their unsustainable "savageness". On the other hand, they can be awakened by the most unexpected or improbable phenomena, as indicated by the eruption of Clytemnestra's ghost in their dream: "it is in a dream I, Clytemnestra, now invoke you" (1952:181; 116). I would argue that this invocation carries more than a reversal of roles in which the prosecutors become persecuted.

As discussed before, within the logic of the *Oresteia*, dreams are of the order of the ob-scene, and can only be transposed to, or symbolised in the proscenium "by indirections", i.e., figuratively. In this respect, the literalisation, or unmediated presence on stage of the Erinyes' dream deserves attention. The appearance of Clytemnestra's *eídōlon* (ghost) is an *eîdos* (image) that goes beyond, or is behind, the private *phantásmata* of the

²⁸ In this fact I find another reason for the entrance of the Erinyes together with Apollo and Orestes, and not later, as Taplin advocates.

Erinyes. It is the ob-verse of the ob-scene Erinyes, i.e., a figuration, in the Symbolic, public dimension of the proscenium, of the chaos installed by the awakening of the mighty Furies.

Furthermore, an important morphological and syntactical chaining is rearticulated by the appearance of Clytemnestra's ghost. She instigates the Erinyes to pursue Orestes, or, more bluntly, she is behind the Erinyes, who are behind Orestes. The preposition "behind" is the morphological radical that informs the counter-coherent reading of the trilogy that I am trying to develop. It is the English equivalent of the Greek *opísō* and the Latin *ob*. Thus, when I state (the obvious) that the Erinyes are behind Orestes, I am suggesting that there is something else behind this behind. That is, the Erinyes constitute the ob-scene of Orestes's triadic structure, and in this sense can be seen as yet another of his *dédoublements*, which throw light onto his ob-scure drives.

This morphological exploration has to be augmented by a syntactical one. Bearing in mind that Greek has three different voices -- active passive, and middle (or reflexive),²⁹ we can re-phrase the persecutory chain in the passive voice, and say that Orestes is being persecuted by the Erinyes. Such construction immediately evinces his

²⁹ I should remark that Lacan also acknowledges the existence of these three voices in psychoanalytic language, especially with regard to the drives (1981b:177).

syntactical place as a (grammatical) subject, and the Erinyes' as agents of the passive. He is the subject who is *driven* by these "obscure" forces.³⁰ The passive inflexion, however, raises the problem as regards the object of the drive, or, in terms of the plot, of the pursuit. In face of the discussion of Orestes's incestuous murder in the previous chapter, it can be ascertained that Clytemnestra fulfills this syntactical role. She still figures as the object of his incestuous (and incessant) pursuit. Her dead status, however, emphasises that the Mother, as the ultimate object, is forever and irretrievably lost.

A tenuous distinction imposes itself here. We are moving in the domain of drives, not of desire. Throughout his writings and seminars Lacan reiterates that desire does not have an object. As I have indicated in Part I of this dissertation, desire is constituted precisely in and by the unattainability of the object of the drive, by the void instituted between "need" and "demand".³¹ In this void Lacan places the "object o" (*l'objet petit a*), a figuration,

³⁰ The Erinyes themselves acknowledge their driving force to Athena: "the killers of their kin we *drive* from their homes" (1970c:37; 421; emphasis added). The Greek verb *elaúnomen* (*elaúnō*) means "to drive, to set in motion, to drive to extremities" (Liddell and Scott, 1994). This thrusting movement is one of the four constitutive elements of the Freudian *Trieb*, drive. In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes", he distinguishes these elements as: thrust or, as the Standard Edition has it, "pressure" [*Drang*], "aim" [*Ziel*], "object" [*Objekt*], and "source" [*Quelle*] (1915c:122-23).

³¹ Freud defines "need" as "a better term for an instinctual [sic] stimulus" (1915c:118-19).

a "form of the lost object" (1981b:180), which, as such, stands as the object cause of desire. In the domain of drives, the object is "of no importance", as Lacan points out, after Freud (1981b:168).

The immaterial quality of the object of the drive is articulated in the *Eumenides* through Clytemnestra qua ghost. Albeit dead, she continues to animate the economy of the Erinyes/drives. The connection is expounded by Lacan: "the drive is subjected to the circulation of the Oedipus complex, to the elementary and other structures of kinship" (1981b:189). In other words, we are dealing with a structure, not with concrete maternal or paternal figures. Hence, Clytemnestra's injunction in the psychoanalytic view of the structure of kinship relations renders equivocal the question concerning the object of the passive sentence. Instead of asking who the object is, we should inquire what the Erinyes/Orestes are looking for, or, after Freud, what is the aim of their pursuit. Revenge and purification are the answers Aeschylus offers us at this stage, but that will be further elaborated in the course of the play.

My reading of the Erinyes as Orestes's ob-scene drives places them at the fulcrum of the conflict of *lógoi* that has been constructed throughout the trilogy and reaches its climax in the last play. In this respect, it is not aleatory that they carry the title of the play, and, moreover, that it is through them that the fundamental question of the

entire trilogy is posed: "what is there herein that any shall call just?" (1952:285) ("*tí tōnd' ereî tis dikaiōs échein*"; 154). Whose is the Law? From what has been discussed in the previous chapters, it can be claimed that the structural conflict of the trilogy takes place behind (*opísō*) the "Clytemnestra (matriarchy) versus Agamemnon (patriarchy)" agon,³² i.e., that it entails something of the order of the ob-scene. These characters are figurations, masks, that enable the ob-scene to be confronted with and in the proscenium.

In this light the contest between Apollo and the Erinyes has to be taken on a symptomatological level: while insisting on the existence of the conflict and on the need for its resolution, it is obsessively oblivious of the fact that it is not Agamemnon's or Clytemnestra's (poured) blood that is at stake, but that the Erinyes are still obscenely sucking blood, blood from which they were born. The outcome of the argument between the young and the old deities could not but come to an impasse. The furious chorus departs with the promise that they "will pursue this man and hunt him down" (1970c:25; 230-31), to which Apollo counterpoises by reassuring (whom?) that he will not let down "someone who

³² I hope that my reading of Clytemnestra as a metaphor for the desire of the chorus has evinced that the rhetorical and political power (*archē*) in the trilogy by far bypasses any form of matriarchy (of the *archē* of the mother). The affairs of the state (and the state of affairs) in the *Oresteia*, likewise the Greek social universe, concern male beings/citizens.

has not yet been purified".³³ These apparently opposed roads are entangled not only in their final destination (telos) -- Athens -- but, moreover, in that they are inscribed in the same primal logos of blood-sucking and purification (a rite which, as noted before, needs blood to be carried out). Hence, Apollo's road, the "road to cure" ("*hierà hodós*"), as Thomson had pointed out (1966:191) is severely undermined, and the road to Athens, consequently and necessarily, made robust.

From Delphi to the Acropolis

Orestes's errands of purification determine the change of topoi, of setting in the *Eumenides*.³⁴ Contradictorily enough, he becomes increasingly less prominent as the play evolves, and in his stead we have the ones who were behind him, his ob-scene Erinyes. I would claim that this change of protagonists underpins a re-focalisation of the kernel of the tragic conflict and of its resolution. More precisely, the question moves from Orestes's purification to the accommodation of his Erinyes/drives into a new linguistic

³³ This is one of the possible translations Liddell and Scott (1994) give to *prostropaíou* (234), which can also be rendered as a "suppliant". I read this noun as another piece of evidence that no purification has taken place at Delphi.

³⁴ The profusion of settings in this play -- especially when compared to the two previous ones, and to the extant tragic canon -- is a trait commonly identified by most scholars (e.g., Kitto, 1970; Lebeck, 1971; Taplin, 1977).

(cultural) order. This is the telos of the Athenian topos.

Apollo's opening speech at Delphi implicitly acknowledges his powerlessness to deal with the Erinyes and closes by sending Orestes to Athena's city (79): "there shall we have judges of your cause, and words to charm them, and shall discover means to release you forever from your distress" (1970c:16; 81-83). The Greek forcefully brings to the fore important issues that are diluted in translation. Apollo promises him *dikastás* (judges), i.e., figures who will provide the answer to the question Electra posed in the *Choephoroi* concerning the source of their salvation: would it come from a "judge or avenger?", "*dikastēn ē dikēphóron*;" (Ch. 120). Apollo had previously demanded from Orestes to be an avenger (*dikēphóros*) vis-à-vis Agamemnon, and now, in order to save him from this blemish, points (him) towards another, opposite, direction/notion: judges (*dikastás*). This means not only that Electra's dilemma is still in effect, but furthermore, that its resolution "will be in and of language", as Goldhill notices (1984:216).

Indeed, Apollo's language indicates that. Moreover, it puts in relief the fluctuating, contradictory vocabulary which reveals the very process of elaboration of a "juridical thought", as Vernant and Vidal-Naquet stress (1988:15). Orestes's acquittal, in the god's view, will be achieved through "*thelktērìous mýthous*" (81-82) "charming, enchanting words or tales". The fabulous, seductive power of

a myth-logos is still resonant and sustains a notion of language in which the concept of *dikē* is inscribed. In addition to this linguistic device, Apollo also promises to deploy "*mēchanás*" (82), "contrivances" in order to persuade the judges on Orestes's behalf. Rather than concentrating on the ethical problems of "the sinister implications of *mēchanas* with a law court" (Vellacott, 1984:40), I would propose to listen closely to the reverberations of this word within the context of its utterance.

Going further than Orestes in the *Choephoroi*, who equally contrived a *mýthos* (554) to achieve his aim, Apollo makes recourse to the more devious and ambiguous means of the *mēchanē*, to a deceitful mechanism in order to assure their victory. Such a blatant case of Machiavellism (*avant la lettre*) is nuanced by the very polysemy of the word. *Mēchanē* (henceforth *mechane*) is also a well-known device in the Greek stage. It refers to some sort of crane "from which flying characters could hang suspended by a rope" (Taplin, 1977:443).³⁵ In spite of elusive historical

³⁵ This device is what gave rise to the expression *theòs apò mēchanēs*, the *deus ex machina*, used in connection to divine intervention at the end of tragedies, like the one at the end of Euripides's *Medea*. Taplin's claim that "the device was not, so far as we know, ever used by Aeschylus" (1977:446) is not so unproblematically held. As he himself notices, Aeschylean scholars of the reputation of a Wilamowitz, for example, actually find support, especially in some fragments of Aeschylus's plays, for the use of the *mechane*. I find the entrance of the chorus in the *Prometheus* as a possible piece of evidence for its deployment by Aeschylus. Nonetheless, we should never lose sight that the domain of the staging of Greek tragedies is one in which we can do little more than grope...

evidence, Apollo's recourse to mechane can be read in terms of a Pirandellian allusion to the interplay between appearance and reality, and, moreover, between fiction and reality, which also constitutes an essential feature of the Dionysian, "the god of tragic fiction" (Vernant, 1991:19). Like Hamlet's play within the play, the presence of the mechane in connection with the procedures of the law court brings in an important theatrical dimension. Through the use of the mechane, the law court can be regarded as a spectacle in which fabulous, enchanting myths are staged with the support of the mechane, as a "bait of falsehood" to catch a "carp of truth", as Polonius would phrase it (*Hamlet*, II,i,63).

My reference to this Shakespearean line in Part I of the dissertation was made as a parallel to Freud's notions of construction in analysis and historical truth. I would expand the comparison here to include Apollo's allusive (and elusive) hint at the spectacular character of the law court which, as such, requires a construction in order to reveal the "carp of truth". The mechane can be seen as playing the role of "construction" or "bait of falsehood", of a contrivance that mediates the passage (of characters) from the ob-scene onto the proscenium.

The goddess Athena puts on a spectacle which Orestes anticipates as "*télos díkēs*" (243), "the outcome of the trial". Besides this literal translation, Orestes's words

imply that the end, the telos of the whole conflict is connected to the trial which, in the Greek polysemy, also entails the resolution of the contradictory notion of *dikē*.³⁶ An important semantic change takes place here. Even though we see no sign of purification at Delphi, Orestes introduces himself to Athena, denying the qualifier Apollo had given him a few lines up -- *prostropaíou* (234), a polluted person. He sees himself "*ou prostrópaion*" (237) i.e., as non-polluted, and declares having had "his guilt's edge blunted and worn off against other habitations..." (1970c:25; 238-39). Rather than speculating which these other habitations are where his purification took place, it seems important to stress Orestes's double negation of his pollution: he is a man "not needing to be purified nor with unclean hands" (1970c:25), "ou *prostrópaion* oud' *aphoíbanton chéra*" (237). Such negation, I would argue, is the *sine qua non* condition for the telos of the tragedy to be reached. The banishment of the semantic field of pollution enables the emergence of a new vocabulary, namely that of trial, justice and law, which the Greek language entwines around the notion of *dikē*, its inflexions and derivatives. "*Télos díkēs*" is what Orestes and the audience awaits.

This semantic stage not only enables but calls for the beginning of the court scene, presided over (directed) by

³⁶ As Sommerstein points out in his commentary of the play, "*télos díkēs* unites the idea of finality... and justice or judgement" (1989:126).

Athena, "daughter of Zeus" ("*Diòs kópē*"; 415), as the Erinyes call her. This epithet has been singled out in the *Choephoroi* as the etymon of *dikē*: "the true born daughter of Zeus -- Justice..." (1970b:64) ("*etētymos Diòs kóra -- Díkan...*"; 948-49). Once more language creates and brings about a serious question, namely, the identification of the notion of justice, *dikē*, with Athena that emerges in this prosopopeia. In other words, *dikē* is not a principle of general validity, but a personal, and particular case. The separation of "*ius* from *iudicium*" (of law from trial), which Gernet identifies as a diacritical moment in Classical social history (1981:190-91), has not yet taken place. However, this is the end (*telos*) of the *Oresteia*, whose steps we should follow.

Athena listens to the two parties of what she significantly calls *lógon* (428). More than "the case" (1970c:37) or "the argument" (1960:150), I would stress the broader sense of *logos* here. That is, the Erinyes and Orestes are part of the same *logos*, of the same logic. Thus their case becomes "too big" (*meîdzo*; 470) not only for mortals, but also for Athena to judge (470-72). She then resolves to "select the best among my citizens... to decide [*diaireîn*] this issue in all sincerity [*etētimōs*]" (1970c:40; 487-88). The resolution is an important one: it implies the amplification of the scope of the conflict and the responsibility for its outcome. In other words, we move

from the individualised human-god relation to the sphere of the polis, to the political domain.³⁷ Moreover, Athena endows this assembly with the power to "decide" over the case. The Greek *diaireîn* carries more than that. Its most frequent meaning is to divide, "to take one from the other" (Liddell and Scott, 1994). When Athena remarks (in 428) that Orestes and the Erinyes are the two sides of the same logos, there is implicit there that they have not yet undergone this process of *diaireîn*. They have not been "taken one from the other", "distinguished, defined, interpreted" (all possible renderings of the Greek verb). These actions will be performed in the rest of the play, but not only by the "best citizens" of Athens.

From the Acropolis to the Areopagus

Two plays -- the *Agamemnon* and the *Choephoroi* -- have set down a conflict whose resolution has been charged to a third play -- the *Eumenides*. In the latter, two different *topoi*, two temples -- Apollo's, at Delphi, and Athena's, in the Acropolis -- have ensued not only an impasse of the conflict, but its exacerbation. Thus the institution of a

³⁷ This movement is fully supported by the change of settings: from the Acropolis, and in particular, from inside Athena's temple the scene moves to the open air space of the Areopagus, as Taplin notices (1977:390).

third party is imperative. A jury³⁸ is constituted as this third, whose task is succinctly described by Athena in 573³⁹ and eloquently announced in 681ff, after a blood(y) debate between Apollo and the Erinyes on the weight of the paternal or maternal lineage. Apollo, whose matrilinear inheritance of Delphi has already been underlined, stands for the paternal principle. The Erinyes, who are, literally, the issue of the paternal blood, defend the maternal right. Athena intervenes at this crossroad by means of a third party, composed of *Attikòs láos* (681), "men of Attica" who should abide to her *thesmós*, ordinance: "proof against thoughts of profit is this council [*bouleutērion*], august, quick to anger, wakeful on behalf of sleepers is the guard-post of the land that I establish" (1970c: 56). Even though Athena sets down, establishes (*kathístamai*; 706) the profile

³⁸ The number of this new chorus is a controversial point among scholars. According to Thomson's commentary on this play, "a whole literature has sprung up around this speech, and the difficulties have been raised with regard to both the nature of Athena's vote and to the grounds on which it is cast" (1966:220). Taplin registers that "there is a venerable controversy over whether they were and odd or even number" (1977:392). Kitto, in his turn, claims that there were "eleven citizens to be sitting with Athena" (1960:65-66). I find a strong influence on Kitto's resolution in Thomson's observation that "it was a principle of Athenian law that, if the votes of the judges were equally divided, the defendant was acquitted...; and the popular explanation of this practice was that it was derived from the precedent set by Athena, who, at the trial of Orestes, gave her casting-vote for his acquittal" (1966:220).

³⁹ Even though she commands that "my ordinances be learned" (1970c:45; 571), they are no more than "that just decision be duly made of their case who stand here" (1970c:46). Athena's *thesmoí* (ordinances, laws, institutions) are not clearly enunciated until 681, as Sommerstein notices (1989:187).

of this assembly, its very constitution represents a beginning of this long process of *diaireîn*, of decision and separation she alluded to above. Besides deciding over the "Orestes versus Erinyes" case, the tribunal is an index that the very notion of *dikē*, which the goddess incarnates, begins to be torn away from her.

Their verdict, however, is yet another impasse. The jurors' deadlock replicates that of the Erinyes and Apollo at the beginning of the play. The repetition of this pattern reiterates the fact that the structural conflict at stake is not the Erinyes versus Orestes, or the "matrilineal versus the patrilineal". What my psycho-poetic reading has been trying to show is the connection between this issue and the elaboration of a new grammar (a cultural order) which decides and interprets (*diaireîn*) primarily what being human means, what male and female are, and where they stand. In the *Oresteia*, and in the Greek tragic discourse in general - as, for example, Vernant and Vidal-Naquet (1988 and 1991), and Loraux (1987 and 1990) would hold -- the notion of *dikē* is the password into the structure of this language.

This comes out clearly in Athena's opening sentence, once the ballots have been cast: "it is now my office to give final judgement" (1970c:58) ("*emòn tód' érgon, loisthíai krînai díkēn*"; 734). Even though she proclaims this to be the final judgment (*loisthíai... díkēn*), it is not the "*télos díkēs*" (243), the final outcome of this

process. Athena had nominated the assembly to "*díkas krínontes*" (682), to "pronounce judgment" (1952:337) on the case. The verb she uses -- *krínontes*, from *krínō* -- has already appeared in another similarly complex instance of the trilogy, i.e., Orestes's interpretation of "Clytemnestra's" dream, in which he entitled himself to "interpret" (*krínō*; Ch. 542) the dream, to pass judgement on its validity and truthfulness. As I pointed out before, desire was behind his interpretation.⁴⁰ (With regard to the jury, their undecidability renders void any critical activity, while verticalising the graveness of the contest.)

Athena takes up this verb, this critical task for herself: "*loisthíai krînai díkēn*" (734), which can be rendered, rather heretically, as "the final interpretation/decision concerning the meaning of *dikē*" will be my deed ("*érgon*"). Deed, however, in Greek is often opposed to "word" (*épōs*). However, it is in words that her deed is performed. Before Austin, Athena (and Greek) knows that words do things, that *érgon* and *épōs* are inscribed in language. She "speaks" ("*ainō*"; 737) for the male ("*ársen*"; 737). Moreover, she declares to be "*kárta d' eimī tou patrós*" (738), a difficult clause to translate. Sommerstein suggests three possible alternatives: "1) 'I am wholly [*kárta*] my father's child',... 2) 'I am wholly on the side

⁴⁰ With Lacan, I would stress that "desire, in fact, is interpretation itself" (1981b:176).

of the father', ... 3) 'I am a faithful [kárta] follower of my father'... All these interpretations make sense, but only (3) says something not already said in this speech" (1989:231). Subscribing to this last comment, I would interpose both clauses and claim that Athena speaks for the father, that is, she speaks in the name of her father, "Zeus, the Third" (Ch. 244-45), from whose head she was born. Athena then incarnates what Lacan has wittingly called "*Père-version*", a perversion (since born of the father's head), a version of the Father principle, and a direction towards this principle.⁴¹ Thus she can qualify to occupy this third topos that the Areopagites, *qua* (mortal) men, could not reach, and enunciate, for the first time, the Name of the Father.⁴² The function of Apollo's "mechane" then is made more explicit. It enables the "epiphany" of "Zeus, the Third",⁴³ i.e., it brings to the proscenium the Name-of-the-Father.

Athena's judgement/interpretation is made in the Name

⁴¹ This pun is made in the (already mentioned) unpublished Seminar XXIII, on Joyce, entitled *Le Sinthome*.

⁴² In his painstakingly difficult formula of sexuation in the *Encore* (1975:73), Lacan holds that the phallic function subjects all men and women, except for One, who, logically, has to be outside it in order for the principle to be constituted, named. This One can be seen as the Name-of-the-Father, whose supposed existence parallels that of God. In the unpublished Joyce seminar (Seminar XXIII), Lacan explicitly posits that "*supposer le Nom-du-Père, c'est Dieu*".

⁴³ According to Taplin, the mechane was connected to "the divine epiphanies which occur soon before the end of tragedies..." (1977:444).

of the Father principle: "this man stands acquitted on the charge of murder", is how both Lloyd-Jones (1970c:59) and H.W. Smyth (1952:345) translate, "*anēr hód' ekpépheugen haímatos díkēn*" (752).⁴⁴ Lattimore (1960:162), and Goldhill (1984:260), however, use the more general meaning of *ekpheúgō* as "escape". With them, we could read this line as Orestes having been able to escape, to flee away from a charge, from a notion of justice based on "reciprocal punishment" (Goldhill, 1984:241). In other words, he has been set free (to escape) from the pursuit of the Erinyes, which, as discussed before, are the agency that closes the incestuous circle by driving him towards Clytemnestra. In this sense, Athena's "père-version" intervenes in the direction (*vers*) of saying "no", of interdicting this furious pursuit of and for the ghost of the Mother. In "*Du Trieb de Freud*", Lacan expounds this Aeschylean formulation in the following terms:

Freud nous révèle que c'est grâce au Nom-du-Père que l'homme ne reste pas attaché au service sexuel de la mère, que l'aggression contre le Père est au principe de la Loi et que la Loi est au service du désir qu'elle institue par l'interdiction de l'inceste. (1966:852)

Athena's judgement ("*krînai díkēn*"; 734) performs the decisive role the goddess had demanded from the jury, that is to "decide this issue", ("*diaireîn toûto prâgma*"; 488),

⁴⁴ I find it hard to see his acquittal as a victory of the male over the female, given that the latter, since the beginning of the play, has been "under" (or behind) the former, as my reading has been attempting to show.

to distinguish, to separate Orestes from the Erinyes *qua* driving force that bound him to the "sexual service" of the Mother. Orestes's long-deferred purification, *katharsis*, has finally taken place. But rather than being a purgation of a fault,⁴⁵ it can be read, on the one hand, as a liberation from a state of blind (sexual) servitude, while also being a subjection to the Law of Athena's court, to the Name-of-the-Father. Belfiore rightly infers from Aristotle's *Poetics* that "we would expect tragic *katharsis* to involve learning" (1992:258). Indeed, Orestes does learn not to oppose himself to, to in-vert, the *père-version* to which Athena gives voice, as he has done before. This learning is intimated much earlier in the play, when he acknowledges that "schooled by misery, I have knowledge of many ordinances of purification..." (1952:299) ("*egō didachtheîs en kakoîs epístamai polloûs katharmouîs*"; 276-77). Paraphrasing Shakespeare, we can say that "the course of true [learning] never did run smooth".⁴⁶ As Aeschylus had announced in the opening play of the trilogy, "*páthei máthos*" (Ag. 177),

⁴⁵ The discussion of the highly complex notion of *katharsis* in Aristotle is beyond the scope of the present analysis. Similarly to the procedure I have adopted as regards other Aristotelian concepts, I will provide possible alternatives of reading/interpreting them. For an insightful analysis of this issue in Aristotle and in literary theory in general I refer to Belfiore's *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion* (1992).

⁴⁶ Lysander's line from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* reads: "the course of true love never did run smooth" (I,i,134). The juxtaposition of love and learning, obviously enough, is not accidental.

i.e., "by suffering they shall learn" (1970a:26).

"So ends, as far as the trilogy is concerned, the story of the House of Atreus: its three-generation-old curse has at last been lifted, and henceforth its heir will be able to enjoy his rightful wealth...". These are Sommerstein's introductory remarks to his commentary on Orestes's farewell speech (1989:234; emphasis added). I wholly subscribe to his idea that the way to Orestes's "enjoyment", *jouissance*, has finally been opened up.⁴⁷ By abiding to the Law of the Father, he is entitled to his father's property, or wealth ("chrēmasin... patrōois"; 777-78), which stands as a palliative to fill in the gap left as a result of the interdiction of the fruit of enjoyment. Orestes then departs to enjoy his phallic *jouissance*. I part company with Sommerstein, however, as regards the end of the story of the House of Atreus. I would argue below that another mechane is deployed, this time by Athena, which will finally enable the House's curse, its *araí* (Eu. 417), the Erinyes, to be addressed.

From the Areopagus to...

I noted in Part I of this dissertation that the Lacanian

⁴⁷ As Alan Sheridan, the translator of Lacan's *Écrits* into English, points out, the latter's notion of *jouissance* encompasses both the sense of "enjoyment of legal rights" and the sexual connotation of pleasure, which the English "enjoy" has lost (1977:x).

notion of the *Nom-du-Père* carries in its own name a facet concerning incest prohibition, or "parrincest", and the question of naming, of the subject's inscription into the Symbolic order. The former aspect is put forth by Aeschylus mainly through Orestes's course in the trilogy, as just discussed, whereas the second is at the core of the last part of the *Eumenides*.

Lacan writes in the *Ornicar?* that "*nommer est un acte, d'ajouter une dit-mension...*" (1975/6:35). This insertion in the dimension of language, I would argue, is the missing part of Athena's "act", of the "*érgon*" (734) she announced it was her duty to perform, and it concerns the name(ing) of the Erinyes.

The title of the play -- the *Eumenides* ("the Kindly Ones") -- has led some scholars to support the idea that a metamorphosis of the wrathful chorus takes place in the last section of the play. Kitto's short and plain statement, for example, that "the black-robed Erinyes" are re-dressed as "the red-robed Eumenides" (1970:95), is a metaphor that raises a highly polemic issue. His textual evidence for this remark is, I assume, Athena's command, before the final procession, that "they be honoured by being dressed up in purple (or red) robes" ("*phoinikobáptois endytoîs esthēmasi timâte*"; 1028-29). The first polemic point concerns the chorus's change of costume. In Taplin's thorough analysis of the staging of the *Oresteia*, grounded on philological bases,

he counter-argues that "if the Eumenides put on the red, it is not a *change* of costume since they do not take off their black: *endytós* has the sense of additional ornament.

Secondly, there is no question of a change of masks by the chorus, which would be an unparalleled and probably impracticable procedure..." (1977:413; emphasis in original).⁴⁸ Like Pessoa's epigraph to this chapter, the question entails the addition of an extra layer. Similarly to the constitution of metaphor discussed in Part I, at play here is the notion of supplement, rather than metamorphosis.

Kitto's comment, furthermore, stands as a theatrical metaphor for the controversial point of the Erinyes' metamorphosis, of their transformation, on the dramatic level, into the Eumenides. A.L. Brown's article "Eumenides in Greek Tragedy" (1984), which has become a diacritical mark in this debate, carefully demonstrates the lack of textual evidence to support the metamorphosis claim: "the word *Eumenídes* does not occur in the play as we have it" (1984:267), even though it occurs four times in Euripides's *Orestes* (38, 321, 836, 1650), where it is used as a synonym for the Erinyes (1984:265).⁴⁹

The presence of such a name in the title of the play is

⁴⁸ Such view is now generally partaken by contemporary scholars, as Belfiore points out (1992:22).

⁴⁹ In Sommerstein's introduction to the commented edition of the play, he fully adheres to Brown's position (1989:11-12).

an equally disputable question. Still according to Brown, it is irrefutable that "the Greek dramatists referred to their own plays by titles" (1984: 268). However, the titles we have today do not necessarily correspond to the ones given by their authors. Brown cites, as a means of example, a case in Aristophanes's *Frogs* (1124), where the play we now know as the *Choephoroi* is referred to as *Orésteia* (1984:268). One of his conclusive remarks, however, is problematic. He postulates that "this is why the title of a Greek play is never whimsical or paradoxical, or designed to tell us anything interesting; it is simply a label to identify the play being talked about" (1984:268). Surely, the identification of a play is far from being a simple process of labeling.

Taking a different interpretative route from the tedious necessities of philology, I suggest that we look at this case in the light of Barthes's "death of the author" (1990:142-48) or even Foucault's author-function. In the millennia-long trajectory of Greek tragic texts (to stick to them only), we are forced to acknowledge, as the philologists correctly emphasise, that there have been a multitude of authors, from scholiasts to popular assumptions, who have had their participation in the constitution of what we take today under the debatable title of the *Eumenides* qua "Aeschylus's text". In other words, while subscribing to the philological evidence concerning

the absence of the word *Eumenídes* in the text, I do not discard the title of the play as a mere label on the grounds that it might not have been given by Aeschylus himself. Moreover, I see this title as a depository of readings of the play along history, and one which pre-figures and evinces some of its main aspects in a problematic manner.

The non-existence of the word Eumenides in the text, except for the title, opens up an intriguing paradox. At the same time that the latter points towards a transformation of these figures, the former calls this transformation into question. Close textual readings can be taken to provide us with a starting point. The exodus of the enlarged chorus calls the Erinyes "*Semnaí*" (1041), an epithet to which we should add *theaí*, according to Sommerstein (1989:10). "Venerable Goddesses" is the generally accepted translation of the expression (e.g., 1952:371; 1970c:73).⁵⁰ The distinctive feature this title awards them, however, is diluted in face of Brown's pertinent observations: "[*Semnaí theaí*] hardly counts as a name at all, since any god or goddess could be described as *semnós*; it is rather an accepted way of referring to deities who are essentially nameless" (1984:262; emphasis in original). Does this entail that the Erinyes become nameless due to the transformation ensued by Athena's powerful argument? Similarly to other

⁵⁰ I am puzzled by Lattimore's rendering of it as "grave goddesses" (1960:171). *Semnós* in Greek has the common meaning of strength, might, but, to my knowledge, not of "grave".

moments in the course of my analysis, I propose to look at the problems raised by philology from a different angle.

With Brown, I discard "Semnai" as a possible new name for the Erinyes, and one that would support their "change of identity". Rather, their "*semnós*" quality seems to reiterate the Erinyes' portentous feature that the trilogy has already shown us. That is to say, their status as "representatives of [certain] forces" (Freud, 1920g:34) remains unaltered in the course of the play. What does change is the *aim* of their force, of their *semnós*. Such an aim had been previously described by Athena in the following terms:

These women have an office that does not permit them lightly to be dismissed; and if they fail to gain the victory [*nikēphóron*] in their cause, the venom from their resentment will fall upon the ground and become hereafter an intolerable and perpetual pestilence to afflict the land.
(1952:317; 476-79)

Their defeat will entail the reenactment of the very violence from which they were born, i.e., Uranus's castration. Like his fallen blood, their venom on the ground will perpetuate the vicious circle of violence. It is up to Athena to break this circle, by means of the only recourse the play postulates as valid and effective, i.e., the *mechane* of language: *peithō* (persuasion).

The *telos* of this persuasive task (*érgon*) is to transform the Erinyes' view of their defeat, of the defeat of their concept of *dikē*, and to make this loss into a source of gain. In Goldhill's perspicacious perception of

the pun the text makes in this respect, the goddess's task is to transform *dikē* into *nikē* (victory) (1984:263-64). There is a lot in this play of signifiers. Bearing in mind the parallel I have previously established between the Erinyes and Freud's notion of the drives, this transformation can be expressed in terms of what he called "the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction", something that he posits as a "great cultural achievement" (1920g:15). How can the renunciation of satisfaction of something so fundamental as the drives become a cultural achievement, how can the defeat of the Erinyes' *dikē* become a *nikē*? Lacan's intervention enables us to find a resolution for this paradox set up by Aeschylus and replicated in Freud, which in his own words concerns "*la connection de [la] normativité libidinale avec une normativité culturelle*" (1966:117).

In Seminar XI, Lacan notices that Freud's "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" posits *sublimation* as one of the vicissitudes of the drives. But Lacan also observes that sublimation (not repression) is also one of the major sources of satisfaction of the drive (1985b:165). From this he concludes that "satisfaction is paradoxical", that it entails something of the order of the impossible, of the Real (1981b:166). Later in the *Encore* he elaborates this satisfaction as belonging to a type that is supplementary (or beyond) the phallic "satisfaction of speech [*parole*]" (1975:61), that is, *feminine jouissance* (1975:73-82),

something which is at the same time inside the phallic Symbolic function, but that also recognises the existence of something supplementary, of the order of the Real.

Aeschylus tersely dramatises and anticipates this intricate theoretical elaboration through Athena's transformation of the defeat of the Erinyes' notion of *dikē* into a *nikē*. The loss they are subjected to is a result of their inscription into the Symbolic proscenium, into the law court, and moreover, of their subjection to Athena's *peithō*: "...revere Persuasion's majesty, the power to charm and sooth that sits in my tongue" (1970c:65; 885-86). If they abide (in and) by this logos, which, as discussed before, is constituted in the Name-of-the-Father, then they will "have a holding in this land, of right [*dikaíōs*] enjoying an eternal honor" (1970c:65; 890-91). Having accepted this loss, the Erinyes can enjoy "in plenty the blessings that make life prosperous [and that] may be made to burgeon from the earth by the sun's radiant beam" (1970c:68; 923-26), as they themselves acknowledge.

It is important to stress that such acknowledgement does not ensue their destruction. As Athena later makes clear: "great is the power of the Lady Erinys among the immortals and those below the earth" (1970c:69; 950-51). In a psycho-poetic vocabulary, we can say that once the Erinyes have undergone a kathartic process, once they have learned to reckon with castration, they can have access to a

feminine jouissance, to this dialectical teaching Greek tragedy offers us, before Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, that if learning entails suffering, it also brings pleasure. As Aristotle states in the *Poetics*,

those who employ spectacular [ὄψεως] means to create not a sense of the terrible [φοβερὸν] but only of the monstrous, are strangers to the purpose of tragedy; for we must not demand of tragedy any and every kind of pleasure [ἡδονῆν], but only that which is proper to it. And since the pleasure which the poet should afford is that which comes from pity [ἐλέου] and fear [φόβου] through imitation [μιμήσεως], it is evident that this quality must be impressed upon incidents [πράγματι]. (1911:49; 1453b 8-14)

The events (*pragmata*) of parricide and incest, which have ultimately been informed by the horrendous Erinyes, have this "terrible" quality Aristotle refers to, and which I have named ob-scene. The audience's exposure to this *ópsis*, to a spectacle that takes place in the proscenium while also making visible the ob-scene, is only possible due to the presence of the skene, of the regulating principle of the Name-of-the-Father. It is this topos that prevents the disarticulation of the Real/Symbolic/ Imaginary knot and enables tragedy "to hold up the mirror to nature", no matter how horrifying this "nature" might be. As Marcus declares in *Titus Andronicus* (from which the title of this chapter is taken), "Father, ... in that name doth nature speak" (I,i,368). On the one hand, the presence of this third Other, the Father principle, says "no" to our most fundamental drives (Shakespeare's "nature"). On the other,

this interdiction does not entail destruction, as the Erinyes attest, but dialectically becomes the principle that stabilises and guarantees any linguistic (or cultural) exchange. This repressive necessity is the malaise Freud identified in our cultural order (1930a:135), and which Lacan radicalises in terms of "le père ou le pire" (in Žizek, 1992:75).

As Athena's intervention makes clear, this principle is not activated by male agents only. Rather than postulating the victory of patriarchy over matriarchy, what I have argued to be the central concern of the *Oresteia* is something that antecedes it, namely, the articulation of the Erinyes/drives with the notion of the Name-of-the-Father, with the Law of culture/language. Furthermore, Athena's intervention, in Zeus name, establishes the distinction Gernet has alluded to between *ius* (law) and *iudicium* (trial) (1981:191). Even though this law has a topographical equivalent, the Areopagus, it is not determined by the will of their individual members, it is not equivalent to the *iudicium*. Rather, *qua* structural principle, it subjects all individuals, males and females. The difference between them comes about by the ways in which they live this subjection. Orestes achieves a phallic *jouissance* exclusively within the Symbolic domain of the Father's property, by glossing over the loss entailed by his subjection to this logos with the thin veil of wholeness: "the man is an Argive once more, and

dwells in his father's heritage..." (1952:347; 757-58). The Erinyes, however, admit their inevitable loss, and find in it the source of a supplementary satisfaction, i.e., *feminine jouissance*.

The closing procession is a celebration of this possibility of reverting the loss of *dikē* into a *nikē*. It is a procession that also carries an important comment on the nature of tragedy. It not only merges the frontiers of the play (the court scene) within the play, but also of the entire (fictional) play and the reality of the theatron. It is a Dionysian epiphany. But it does not enact the Imaginary wholeness of the One. As Vernant points out in a luminous essay on Eros and Dionysus, or in the terms of my analysis, of desire and tragic language, "this unity is the dispersion into a multiplicity of particular existences" (in Halperin et. al., 1990:468). He derives this idea from the neoplatonists who, according to him, "used the motif of the mirror of Dionysus to express the passage, on the cosmological level, from One to the many" (ibidem, p.268). Vernant expands this mythological reference thus:

The little Dionysus is... amused, seduced by his own image in the mirror where he is duplicated. He projects his reflection outside himself, divides himself in two, not where he is and where he looks, but in a false appearance of himself located where in reality he is not, and which returns his glance. This duplication which removes him from himself is the occasion for the Titans to cut him to pieces..., fragmenting unity into scattered multiplicity. (in Halperin et. al., 1990:268)

This mythical account combines, *avant la lettre*, Lacan's Imaginary mirror stage and the constitution of the divided subject by the cleavage of the image captivation. Furthermore, it can be used as a metaphoric description of the kathartic learning the audience of a Greek tragedy can undergo. Amending Hamlet, I would suggest that the telos of tragedy is not solely "to hold the mirror up to nature", but once this has been done, to shatter it to pieces, so that we can live (and learn) with Dionysus, that the painful horror of fragmentation can be a source of enjoyment, of *jouissance*.

CONCLUSION

"MAN IS A GIDDY THING, AND THIS IS MY CONCLUSION"

*O real não está na saída nem na chegada:
ele se dispõe para a gente é no meio
da travessia.¹*

J. Guimarães Rosa (*Grande Sertão:
Veredas*)

Conclusions in academic writing in general seem to fall prey of what Freud called a "compulsion to repeat" (e.g., 1920g:18). That is, they re-state, in a different phraseology, what has been said in the introduction and attempt the impossible task of comprising an entire *travessia* into a few pages. Albeit acknowledging the inevitability of such a procedure, I will try to make it less tediously repetitive by saying not only what I have said but also some of the things I have not said, and what I would like to say in the future.

As from the title, this dissertation declares its major concern with names, in particular with a proper name, the Name-of-the-Father. In other words, it establishes an interplay between the singularity of the proper name and the

¹ Like that of Mallarmé, Joyce (and some of Lacan), Rosa's language is structured on a constant play of signifiers, and on a semantic-syntactical rupture of the Portuguese grammar. This makes a translation of his work, and this novel in particular, an impossible task. I would roughly render this sentence as "the real is neither at the departure nor at the arrival: it disposes itself to us in the act of traversing".

possibilities of its pluralisation.² The sub-title, however, cuts across the proper-ty (and propriety) of the name insofar as it introduces the domain of common names, i.e., psychoanalysis and literature. This apparently paradoxical frame -- of the proper being a property of the common -- in actual fact announces the rhetorical hinge which structures my analysis and around which it revolves: the articulation of the metaphoric and the metonymic poles.

From the paradigmatic axis I have selected the Name-of-the-Father, a metaphoric concept of psychoanalytic language which also enjoys a metaphoric status throughout the dissertation. First of all it is substituted for by, or condensed in other, more "alien" proper names, like those of Agamemnon, Athena, Zeus. Furthermore, the Name-of-the-Father has functioned as a trope (and a topos) through which I have been able to set up and explore a³ relationship between literature and psychoanalysis. The selection and substitution procedures of Jakobson's metaphoric axe have been at play in this translative situation, where one language yields the exegetical floor to the other in order

² The conflation of the singular and the plural is indicative of an attempt I have undertaken throughout my analysis, that is, to break away from antinomic pairs and to look for (or establish) a dialectical relation between terms.

³ The indefinite article here should be taken as emphasising not only the non-definitive quality of my analysis of this relationship, but also of its being one, in a series of many possibilities.

to be ex-plained.⁴ This means that when one language is speaking, it is the other that is not only spoken of, interpreted, but also that this other speaks. In other words, one speaks through the other (and the Other). That is why I announced in the Introduction that reciprocity would be a remote quality of the dialogue between these two languages.

This relation of alterity needs to be further problematised. Admittedly, psychoanalysis occupies the more prominent analytical position in the counter-coherent reading I have developed in this dissertation. From what has been said above we can then infer that literature stands as the Other of psychoanalysis, and vice-versa. Or, as Felman expands, "...in the same way that psychoanalysis points to the unconscious of literature, literature, *in its turn, is the unconscious of psychoanalysis*" (1982:10; emphasis in original). Lacan has underlined that the unconscious is the "*discours de l'Autre, où il faut entendre le de au sens du de latin (détermination objective)*..." (1966:814; 1977:312). This over-determined relation raises various problems for a comparative analysis. Among them, I would like to pursue one, which could be summarised by the notion of continuity, or in rhetorical terms, by the notion of metonymy, of syntagmatic combination. Can psychoanalysis be regarded as a

⁴ Similarly to the constitution of metaphors, which, as seen before, ultimately rests on a metonymic basis, this procedure is also informed by a contiguous relation between the two languages.

part of this other whole called literature? Is the latter a master genre which engenders this other sub-genre? In order to mitigate the mechanistic quality of this formulation it seems necessary to look at the metonymic relation more closely.

The common names "psychoanalysis" and "literature" of my sub-title have been reversed in the course of the analysis into proper names: Freud-Lacan, and Aeschylus, respectively, a reversal which also constitutes a metonymic turn. The hinge that sustained this movement was the Name-of-the-Father, a metaphor for the advent of the institution of the Law of laws, the regulatory principle of human subjectivity and sociability. My attempt was to show a structural coalescence in the conceptualisation of the psychoanalytic subject and the tragic stage, whose semiologic inflection was regarded as informing the very structure of tragic language. In other words, I tried to show a synchronic relation identified as structural in the languages of (Lacanian) psychoanalysis and (Greek) tragedy.

The synchronic structure, however, is traversed by the diachronic axis. In his essay "Before the Law", which discusses a short parable in Kafka's *The Trial* in the light of the Kantian categorical imperative and the "as if", Derrida poses a necessary question: "one cannot be concerned with the law, or with the law of laws, either at close range or at a distance, without asking where it has its place and

whence it comes" (1992:191). Freud localised this place of origin primarily in the mythical narrative of *Totem and Taboo* (1913), which attempts to account for a history of "things which have never happened but have always existed", paraphrasing Wertenbaker's epigraph in my presentation of Freud (Chapter I). Lacan intervenes in the latter's problematic equation of myth, history, and "social psychology", and places the question of the Law in the domain of language. Instead of a tale (from which the notion of the Oedipus complex emerges), he gives us the signifier of the *Nom-du-Père*, as tersely suggested in Ovid's epigraph "*littera pro verbis*" of Chapter II.

Aeschylus, in his turn, intertwines both topological alternatives, as my analysis of the *Oresteia* tried to demonstrate. He anticipates Aristotle's distinction between history and poetry, stated in the *Poetics* in the following terms: "...it is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen..." ("*toûto poiētoû érgon estín, all' oía àn génoito...*") (1451a 38-39; 1911:35). In the optative mode that characterises fictional language, the poet offers the conditions of possibilities for other discourses to formulate their "categorical imperatives". This is what I have attempted to bring to the fore in the conjunction of psychoanalysis and literature, and Derrida shows in the relation between philosophy and literature (1992:181-220). As Rodolphe Gasché points out in his reading

of the Derridean essay,

if Derrida can say that the thought of pure law seems *a priori* to shelter narrativity and fiction, it is because he understands these possibilities to be conditions, rules, laws without which the thought of pure law becomes impossible" (1995:119).

It has been my general claim that the *Oresteia* in particular provides psychoanalysis with the possibility of a general, conceptual thought.⁵ An important question left dormant in the course of my analysis is evinced here through Derrida's discussion of the relation between philosophy and literature around the notion of the law. While the philosopher selects a modern narrative for his case study, psychoanalysis privileges the tragic genre. Furthermore, I have chosen this particular tragedy, and not, for example, the Theban cycle (*Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*), which enjoys in the psychoanalytic discourse the status of virtually a commonplace of reference. Among the many reasons provided in the course of my analysis for this choice, an important one was indicated at the end of my discussion of the *Eumenides* (Chapter V). I have in mind the polemic scene of the "transformation" of the Erinyes.

The outcome of their agon with Athena is generally taken by scholars in terms of either one of two apparently

⁵ Again, singular and plural are at play here. Not only is the *Oresteia* a particular case of the general language of tragedy, but also the latter, inclusive of the former, can be seen as a case of the particular vis-à-vis the generalising attempt of psychoanalysis.

opposed categories. On the one hand it is regarded negatively, as the defeat of the Furies, and of whatever they are regarded as representing (e.g., Zeitlin, 1978). On the other, it is seen as the long-awaited triumph of law and order (e.g. Taplin, 1977). I have argued that it be taken in a dialectic manner. While undeniably constituting a defeat of their notion of *dikē*, from it there can also emerge a certain idea of *nikē*, of victory. Furthermore, the logic of the text (and of cultural order) is such that the Erinyes' succumbing (defeat, accommodation, sublimation would also be possible readings) to Athena or to the Name-of-the-Father is posited as the only possible alternative. "*Le père ou le pire*", has observed Lacan. In effect, it is their subjection to the law that makes the law the Law and hence puts it into effect. In this sense the celebratory tone at the end of the trilogy has to be read together with its more tragic reverberations. It is in the intimate conjunction of both that not only the general Law is carried into effect but also that the laws regulating tragic language are spelled out. Within the inexorability of the *páthos máthei*, of gaining through loss, there emerges the condition of possibility of human subjectivity and social interaction, which is far from being a stable given.

While the philosopher (Derrida) finds a privileged topos in twentieth-century narrative, psychoanalysis (in particular Freud and less so Lacan) awards Greek tragedy the

distinctive position as one of its major source of reference. The privileging of one genre and literary period over the other by these two discourses is not accidental.⁶ The tragic idiom, as I have emphasised after Loraux, is characterised by its disruptive interrogation of the law and its limits, resulting ultimately in its (re)affirmation. This radical exploration of boundaries, "this cathartic interplay of the imaginary, the forbidden, and the real..." (Loraux, 1987:33)⁷ is, I would suggest, one of the major forces of attraction tragedy exerts on psychoanalysis. One substantial difference, however, should not escape us. As Loraux stresses, the former takes place on a "stage set up by the city for the tangling and untangling of actions that anywhere else it would be dangerous or intolerable even to think about (1987:33). Psychoanalysis can be seen today as being this sort of stage which allows the unthinkable not only to be thought about, but also displayed, (re)presented. One major difference, however, as Derrida points out, lies in the fact that the analytic setting (as it is commonly referred to in psychoanalytic jargon) is "a scene behind

⁶ A speculative attempt, even if brief, of the reasons for Derrida's choice would obviously be beyond the scope of this dissertation, let alone its conclusion.

⁷ Loraux's tripartite division would receive, in Lacanian terminology, the names of Imaginary, Real, and Symbolic, respectively.

closed doors [*huis clos*]" (1994:235).⁸ The enclosure (or privatisation) of this exposure is far from being an isolated phenomenon.

A brief look at the history of the theatrical space, which goes *pari passu* with that of drama in general (not to mention social order), could serve to pinpoint the overall transformations (or reconceptualisation) of what is thought to constitute the public and the private domains.⁹ The wide open space of Greek theatre was located either within the geographical limits of a sanctuary, e.g., the theatre of Epidaurus, or at the borders of the sacred Acropolis, as was the case of the theatre of Dionysus. This proximity to the divine is one of the indications of the fact that the openness of the Greek theatre should not be equated to a lack of surveillance and of institutionalisation. As an inextricably "social, aesthetic, and psychological phenomenon" (Vernant and Vidal-Naquet, 1988:9), fifth-century Greek tragedy (and comedy) is thus subjected to a severe set of regulating principles, of which Aristotle's *Poetics* can be taken as a distant, but still incontestable example. The surveillance of which the theatre is object is made more conspicuously present with the re-emergence of

⁸ The reference to Sartre's *Huis Clos* (*No Exit*) cannot escape us here.

⁹ The theatre as a metaphor for the study of these transformations has been used, for example, in Richard Sennet's *The Fall of the Public Man* (1992).

theatrical presentations in the Middle Ages. Initially sited inside churches,¹⁰ it gradually gained access to public squares, that is to say, from the strict control of the church the theatre moved to the hands of secular power, especially of the powerful guilds. The Renaissance, particularly in England, makes a decisive step towards the enclosure of the theatrical space. Inspired by the architecture of the popular inns, circular or rectangular spaces are built in order to house a troupe of players, now under the tutelage of a nobleman. A faint mark of their classical predecessor is kept present, i.e., the open ceiling. The eighteenth century will give rise to an irreversible and reverberating process, fully carried into effect in the nineteenth century, namely, the covering up of this last vestige of the classical theatre. From then on the theatre becomes a *huis clos* space.

This theatrical enclosure supports its dramatic counterpart. As Sartre's play stresses, there are certain unsurpassable limits in the being of humans, in human beings. The insistence on this demarcating line is allusive to Greek tragedy. But whereas the latter institutes and explores a dialectical relationship between the openness of its space and the inexorable limitations circumscribing human (inter)action, modern theatre conflates the dramatic

¹⁰ This site greatly influenced the "citational" character of Medieval drama vis-à-vis religious texts.

topos (as topic) with the theatrical topos (as space). Psychoanalysis, I would suggest, can be regarded as an attempt to articulate in a modern idiom the dialectic of the tragic theatre. Its most fundamental concept -- the unconscious -- is repeatedly stated as an individual precipitate of the collective, as a conjunction of the private and the public. In addition to the various examples given in Part I of this dissertation, it seems pertinent to recall an analogy made by Lacan in "Function and Field of Speech and Language": "what is curiously called in analysis 'the material', as the drama in which the original myths of the City State are produced before its assembled citizens stands in relation to a history that may well be made up of materials, but in which a nation today learns to read the symbols of a destiny on the march [*d'une destinée en marche*]..." (1977: 47; 1966:255). This destiny is ultimately bound by the articulation of the metaphoric and the metonymic poles: "*ce jeu signifiant de la métonymie et de la métaphore... noue mon sort à mon destin...*", remarks Lacan in the "Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious" (1966:517; 1977:166).

However, differently from tragedy, the "psychoanalytic act"¹¹ aims at a specific sort of catharsis,¹² namely the

¹¹ This is the title of Lacan's unpublished seminar XV, *L'acte psychanalytique*.

¹² As indicated before, catharsis is understood, after Belfiore (1992), in the sense of a process which produces knowledge.

dissolution of symptoms, which are conceptualised in rhetorical terms: "a symptom being a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element [*élément signifiant*]" (1977:166; 1966:518). In other words, psychoanalysis, *qua* analytical-interpretative discourse, is geared towards the dismantling of metaphors, even if to this effect it makes recourse to other metaphoric and metonymic operations on which the transfer and the interpretation are grounded. Tragedy, in its turn, *qua* poetic language, engenders "*un jet continu, ... un tissu éblouissant de métaphores*" (Lacan, 1966:507; 1977:157), whose reverberations enable not only its spectators/readers, but other discourses as well, to find there the basis for their gnosiological acts, be they of a subjective or epistemic nature.

The march and some of its future steps

A destiny on the march. This indeed is the tone set up by the procession which closes the *Oresteia*. Aeschylus's choice of closing the trilogy with a procession is the last of the many *coups de théâtre* we have had in the course of the three individual plays. This spectacular quality represents "a significant movement within the drama", Taplin observes (1977:415). The significant quality of this event rests, I would claim, in the very idea of movement that the

procession incarnates. *Qua* process-ion, it does not arrive at any particular place in the *Eumenides*.¹³ This indefiniteness, I would suggest, is only consistent with the instability of language (and of subjectivity) which informs the trilogy. Expanding Benedict's conclusion in *Much Ado About Nothing*, the world, since constituted in and by language, "is a giddy thing". That is why Aeschylus does not enclose the procession around a final destination but, conversely, stresses its quality *qua* process. Albeit the fact that some, temporary, resolution has been achieved, that the Name-of-the-Father has been instituted as a linguistic (and cultural) arbiter, its regulating presence is not a permanent given.¹⁴

Indeed, as I have stated in the Introduction, and argued in the course of this dissertation, the paternal

¹³ As I have argued throughout my analysis, the most significant events in the trilogy are embedded in linguistic difficulties. The procession's final destination is given by Athena in an ambiguous and polemic phrase: "*ómma gàr pásēs chthonòs Thēsēdos exíkoit' àn eukleēs lóchos...*" (1025-26). Lloyd-Jones renders it as "you shall come to the very eye of Theseus' land", taking *ómma* (eye, i.e., "the most precious part of anything" (1970c:72) in the accusative case. The translator of the Loeb edition, on the other hand, reads *ómma* as a nominative case: "for the very eye of the whole land of Theseus shall come forth, a glorious train..." (1952:369). Brown adheres to Lloyd-Jones rendering: "*ómma* is not the subject of the sentence; it is the accusative of place reached which the verb badly needs" (1984:274). Based on this case, the last two mentioned authors hold that the procession's final destination is the Acropolis.

¹⁴ In this respect I disagree with Taplin's reading of "what the procession means", i.e., "the permanence and security of the ratification" (1977:415) of the pact celebrated between Athena and the Erinyes. The very idea of permanence is theatrically undermined by the procession and its obscure destination.

metaphor is a notion that never ceases to be written. Aeschylus's processional (and "process-ual") ending is a theatrical affirmation of such a case, and anticipates what Hurstel remarks in her essay "*La fonction paternelle, questions de théorie ou: des lois à la Loi*": "the relationship between man and the paternal function is inscribed in a history that cannot be written once and for all" (in Augé et al., 1989:245). It is, as Lacan has observed, on the march. Like all metaphoric processes, it is a case of "interminable analysis".¹⁵ One of the main characteristics of this type of analytical outcome is, according to Freud, an unresolved part of the transference (1937c:218). In a rhetorical vocabulary we can re-formulate Freud's claim in terms of the impossibility of, or the resistance metaphors (or, to this matter, figurative language in general) pose to an exhaustive analysis, to a "proper totalization" (de Man, 1978:19), as I pointed out in the Introduction.

Such a claim makes important comments not only as regards psychoanalytical practice (an issue that is beyond this discussion) but, in particular, my analytical enterprise. As stated from the outset, it consisted above all in a translation exercise, a transferential experience, a crossing over (*travessia*) distinct languages. My initial

¹⁵ I am here paraphrasing the title of Freud's paper, "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" (1937c).

hypothesis was that, albeit being different languages, psychoanalysis and literature (especially Greek tragedy) replicate one another. Or, in Felman's words, "in much the same way that literature falls within the realm of psychoanalysis (within its competence and its knowledge), psychoanalysis itself falls within the realm of literature, and its specific logic and rhetoric" (1982:6-7).

The point or topos of articulation of this mutual implication was the notion of the Name-of-the-Father. In fact, it has been the signifier that enabled my translation/interpretation to take (a) place. As Lacan points out in "The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of its Power", "*l'interprétation, pour déchiffrer la diachronie des répétitions inconscients, doit introduire dans la synchronie des signifiants qui s'y composent, quelque chose qui soudain rende la traduction possible...*" (1966:593; 1977:233). The fact that this "something" that made my translation possible was overtly a metaphor (i.e., another translation), clearly signposts not only the limited, unexhausted dimension of my analysis, but also its interminable quality.

Such quality asks for a revision of an assertion made in the Introduction. I opened this dissertation by stating that it was a conclusion. I would now posit its formal conclusion as an introduction. Or, inspired by Aeschylus, I would put in relief its process-like nature. What stands now

as a closure is in fact the prologue, or the first stage (both in its diachronic and topological senses) of a project to be continued in the next years. I hope to have demonstrated through this analysis that psychoanalysis and literature can entertain a fruitful hermeneutical relationship, without reducing the latter to a subservient position to the former, nor subscribing to the equally problematic procedure of doing "applied psychoanalysis". I would now like to proceed and explore other instances of the literary discourse where this relationship can be established.¹⁶

The two major topoi I have in mind have been indirectly present in the course of this analysis. The most conspicuous one is Shakespeare, whose significance has been constantly hinted at through the titles of all these chapters and through explicit references to some of his works. The other topos, which I have repressed until this conclusion, is the Brazilian modern writer João Guimarães Rosa (1908-1967).¹⁷ His referential and reverential novel in the Brazilian canon -- *Grande Sertão: Veredas* (henceforth *GS*)¹⁸ -- will be the

¹⁶ It should be underlined that I do not believe that all literary texts allow for such an analytical approach.

¹⁷ Both topoi or authors have been visited in my disciplinary training, explicitly in my two qualifying exams.

¹⁸ First published in 1956, the novel had a revised, definite version in 1958. References to the text are taken from *Grande Sertão: Veredas*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio Editora, 1968. Among the many translations *GS* has received, its English version (*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*. Trans. James L. Taylor and

backbone of the second stage of this project. It will cross the notion of the paternal metaphor with that of the *sertão* (backlands), a geographical region in central Brazil which has acquired a highly metaphorical status within Brazilian culture and literature.

I identify in Rosa's construction of the *sertão* a structure similar to that of the Greek tragic stage and the Lacanian tripod (Real, Symbolic, Imaginary). But while in the latter two cases the triad is differentiated as from the nominal level, the *sertão* is made to comprise all three. As its narrator/protagonist evinces, "the *sertão* accepts all names" (p.370). This metaphoric density is intricately woven in the narrative fabric, and its analysis, hence, would by far extrapolate the limits of the present dissertation. Again, I heed the cautionary remark of the narrator of *Grande Sertão* -- "*o sertão era para, aos poucos e poucos, se ir obedecendo a ele; não era para à força se compor*" (p.284).¹⁹

Such a remark clearly underlines the resistance the *sertão* poses to a totalizing, finite composition (be it poetical or analytical). As I would like to demonstrate, the *sertão*, qua metaphor, can be contiguously taken as another

Harriet de Onís. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963) is undoubtedly one of the most objectionable ones.

¹⁹ "The *sertão* was to be, little by little, obeyed. It was not to be composed by force". I stress once more that my translation does not convey the syntactical and grammatical ruptures, nor the overall signifying complexities of Rosa's text.

name for the process of enunciation of the Name-of-the-Father. That is, it comes into being at the articulation of the metaphoric and the metonymic poles. Like the saga of the House of Atreus, it effects, within the cause and effect relation of metonymic operations, the institution of the metaphoric Symbolic law, while concomitantly exposing the precariousness of its existence.

The metaphoric/metonymic articulation can also be seen at the fulcrum of the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature. The latter provides some of the fundamental metaphors for the constitution of the former, whereas psychoanalysis can be taken as a particular genre of literary discourse, as a special part of this whole.²⁰ Furthermore, as I hope to have demonstrated, psychoanalysis can offer a fruitful basis for the analysis of literary texts and, by the same token, certain literary texts can provide insightful interpretations of the psychoanalytic discourse. This metonymic exegesis, as argued since the Introduction, is informed by the constitution of contiguous links, which are expounded by Lacan in the following terms:

interpretation concerns the factor of a special temporal structure that I have tried to define in

²⁰ It should be underlined, however, that this metonymic affiliation of psychoanalysis to literature exposes one of the facets of psychoanalytic discourse and hence does not suffice to account for its status as a field of knowledge. Indeed, the interfaces of psychoanalysis with science and philosophy, for example, would have to be taken into consideration in any taxonomic endeavour of the discipline. Such an attempt has not been the purpose of this dissertation, as I have sufficiently reiterated.

the term metonymy. As it draws to its end,
interpretation is directed towards desire, with
which, in a certain sense, it is identical.
Desire, in fact, is interpretation itself"
(1981b:176).

It is the pulsation between these metaphoric and the
metonymic variants and, moreover, the vitality it offers to
the critical activity that will continue to animate my
academic practice...

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