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RE-CREATING A LIFE
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL WRITINGS OF ELIAS CANETTI
AND PABLO NERUDA

By

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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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INTRODUCTION

Canetti, Neruda and Autobiographical Problems

Although it is always difficult to strictly define a literary genre, this difficulty seems to be more acute when one considers the autobiography. The large canon of literary criticism that has flourished around this genre has done little to simplify matters, so much so, that "the more the genre gets written about, the less agreement there seems to be on what it properly includes."¹ It is thus that Spengemann for one, has included works such as *The Scarlet Letter* by Hawthorne and Dickens' *David Copperfield* in the canon of autobiography, and James Olney analyzes T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" as an autobiographical work.

Inclusion or boundaries though, seems one of the least challenging problems of a genre wrought in what I shall call "internal problematics" that is, problems that arise within a work that has been classified as "autobiography": mainly the problems of time, fiction and historical veracity, author-reader relationship and the problem of omissions, selectivity and inclusions. The works I have chosen for this thesis, Canetti's *Die gerettete Zunge*, *Die Fackel im Ohr* and *Das Augenspiel* as well as Neruda's *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias*, present these internal problems as well as very particular ones born out of the complexity of their very inception. These self-referential constructs portray an interpretative voyage through life, and represent the effort of the writer to re-create different stages of experience in order to gain an understanding of this voyage. The autobiography as such becomes an instrument of self discovery, as is Canetti's

¹William C. Spengemann, *The Forms of Autobiography: Episodes in the History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980) xi.

work, while it assumes the further goal of elucidating as well as instructing in Neruda's *Memorias*. It is therefore my intent, for the purpose of this work, to concern myself on the manner of self-representation and re-creation in these autobiographies, and to discuss and discover through careful textual analysis the different modalities, the unique form and the ultimate intent of these works in order to gain a better understanding of these authors as well as their works.

It is my contention that as literary constructs these autobiographies are stylistically representative of the autobiographical personality that created them² and are therefore examples of the poetically conceived autobiography and of the socio-psychological one. Neruda re-creates his life poetically. The autobiography discloses and re-creates those events the autobiographer views as important in the creation of his poetic persona, and is less concerned with re-viewing and resolving complex interpersonal relationships. His autobiography therefore becomes primarily an "ars poetica." The language in the autobiography is often the language of poetry as he frequently uses metaphors, similes and poetic imagery to re-create these events.

Canetti's autobiography is more complex as the emphasis and the intent of the work changes from book to book. *Die gerettete Zunge* represents the psychological quest of finding understanding not only of the "self," that is the author-narrator, but of the deep and troubling relationship of this "self" with the

² William L. Howarth, "Some Principles of Autobiography," *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 87.

"other": his mother. *Die gerettete Zunge* therefore becomes a re-creation and an elucidation of a conflict which lends itself to a psychological -- even a Freudian approach. This part of the autobiography treats Canetti's childhood, and is a much richer book than the two parts that follow it, a characteristic that according to Burton Pike is common in much literary autobiographical writing, as it is in the re-creation of the early part of life that the literary autobiographer deals primarily with his personal development, while the later text tends to dwell on their literary productions.³ *Die Fackel im Ohr* represents Canetti's search for identity as an "artist." Thematically there is a shift, from the conflictive interpersonal relation --which is dealt with in *Die gerettete Zunge*-- to the struggle of adolescent self-realization that is explored in *Die Fackel im Ohr*. The latter re-creates an epiphanic experience-- the awareness of the power of the masses--that becomes a point of departure in Canetti's artistic life. This experience--the burning of the Palace of Justice in Vienna-- signals the beginning of Canetti's fascination with crowds and becomes the primary impulse that results in *Masse und Macht*, a sociological study that took Canetti forty years to write. Canetti changes the narrative approach he uses in *Die Fackel im Ohr* in *Das Augenspiel*. In *Das Augenspiel*, Canetti re-creates the experiences that became the initial impulse for

³Burton Pike, "Time in Autobiography" *Comparative Literature* 4 (1976) 333.

Pike points out that "Eckermann once asked Goethe why, in his autobiography, the description of his later years could not have the fullness of detail of the parts devoted to his childhood and youth. Goethe replied: "I have to treat these later years more as annals. What predominates in them is less my life than my activity"(334) This assertion also holds true for Canetti, who devotes much of *Die Fackel im Ohr* and *Das Augenspiel* to the re-creation of the genesis of his works and to his development as a writer.

the writing of some of his works, such as *The Wedding*, but the main text is given over mostly to the re-creation of the artistic milieu in which the author moved .

There is an interesting authorial move in *Das Augenspiel* as the author becomes a first person narrator whose life can often be viewed independently from the characters he re-creates. Since much of the emphasis of the book is on the depiction of other artists, Canetti does not often achieve the fusion "narrator-protagonist" that is prevalent in the autobiography and that represents a quest for self- recognition. ⁴The book becomes a historical chronicle more than a self revelatory document. Canetti uses the autobiography as an interpretative instrument as well as a representational one, and he moves his interpretive center from one book to another. The autobiography thus becomes a tool of reconstruction and self-revelation through which the author approaches what he perceives as past experiences, and he re-creates them in order to bring forth the explanatory text that becomes his life.

It is my contention that memory is not simply a convenient repository in

⁴ Howarth, 84-114.

In proposing an analogy between the autobiography and a self- portrait. William Howarth discusses the " author-narrator" problem, asserting that we must carefully distinguish the author from the character, as it is the latter that acts as a double persona, "telling the story as a narrator, enacting it as a protagonist." Howarth says that although these figures are one and the same, they do not share the same time and space, thus existing as separate entities that retrieve their experiences from a common past. For Howarth the time element begins to change when the narrator approaches the present and his thoughts begin to match that of the protagonist. This process of fusion is missing in a great part of *Das Augenspiel* as Canetti re-creates characters that had little direct interaction with him, but were important as historical or literary figures. Therefore, his perception of them is static and not a dynamic process that admits change, and therefore fusion.

which the past is preserved inviolate ready for inspection and retrospection at any future time, but that the autobiography expresses the play of the autobiographical act itself in which the materials of the past are shaped by memory and imagination to serve the needs of the present consciousness.⁵ The resulting text is a fictional construct which evolves from a process of selective representation of experiences. "It is," says Eakin, "an act of self-invention that is always practiced in living and sometimes formalized in writing."⁶ The autobiography is therefore, as the title of my thesis suggests, the creation of a literary construct through which the author re-creates his life.

Fiction in Autobiography

Though I am treating the autobiography as a fictional construct, this should not be taken as a statement that the autobiography is not experiential or factual, and that fallacies are willingly brought into the text. The problem is more complex than this. I am arguing that the autobiography is a literary artifact in which the author tries to re-create his life, and that it is this very process of re-creation which admits the possibilities of fictions into it

This issue is a highly debated. Barret J. Mandel, for example, argues that the autobiography is *not* a fiction, and that the writer's impossibility to put life or

⁵Paul John Eakin, *Fictions in Autobiography. Studies in the Art of Self-Invention* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 5.

⁶Eakin, 9.

memories onto a page does not necessarily render the work a fiction. The dichotomy fiction/non fiction is therefore a false one. What will categorize the work as fiction or autobiography, argues Mandel, is the "intent" of the work. "At every moment of any true autobiography " says Mandel, " []the author's intention is to convey a sense that 'this happened to me,' and it is this intention that is always carried through in a way which,[I believe,] makes the result different from fiction."⁷ The intent of the autobiography is to reveal a personal truth that he shares with his reader. Mandel also argues that the introduction of "falsehoods" in the text does not deny the text as an autobiography. But it is precisely these "falsehoods" or "untruth" that, conceptually we have to separate from the notion of "fiction in autobiography," since they connote the textual introduction of non-existent realities or intentional fallacies. There is never a deliberate intent on the part of the autobiographer to introduce non-existent experiences, but the experiences that he chooses to represent are filtered perceptions of these experiences.

When I refer to the autobiography as a fictional construct, I am referring to a narrative and to a narrator who reconstructs⁸ his perceived reality in the very act of creating his narrative. He re-creates a likeness of himself, or as Olney says " a metaphor of the self." This metaphor is the crucial and inescapable means of

⁷Barrett J. Mandel, " Full of Life Now," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical. ed.*, James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 53.

⁸ Susanna Eagan, *Patterns of Experience in Autobiography* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984) 20.

perceiving our world and of explaining what we perceive. Eagan says that:

Even if he [the autobiographer] intends to write about his life as directly as possible, the activity of writing interferes between his past and the written word that he creates... The autobiographer may summon memory to his aid, amended and corrected by data such as letters and diaries, and begin to write about himself, but his muse, Mnemosyne, is an artist, his data are inadequate, his perception is partial, his role is essentially that of an interpreter and coordinator and his "actual events" become "virtual events" in the process of writing. Fiction, in other words, ensnares reality from the beginning.⁹

Metaphor therefore creates a virtual event and in autobiography a virtual life.¹⁰

Pike has also advanced the idea of fiction in autobiography. He defines the autobiography as "a novel written in the present with one's past as its subject."

The past, "he says" are memories of it --scattered shards of events or feeling--but they are re-created within a later context. There is no way to retrieve the original fact or experience. The only way of giving the illusion of doing so is to reinvent the past in the present."¹¹ By calling the autobiography a "reinvention" of the past.

⁹ Eagan, 14.

¹⁰ Eagan, 18-19.

¹¹ Pike, 337.

Pike proposes the idea of fiction not as a misrepresentation of empirical experiences, but as a re-creation of these experiences through time and memory.

The difficult notion of fiction in autobiography becomes even more complex when the author himself admits that his reliance on memory can not be total, since "memory is not simply a convenient repository in which the past is preserved inviolate,"¹² but that the information that is re-created might be imperfect, distorted or even doubtful. In *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* Mary McCarthy freely admits to these doubts:

About the tin butterfly episode, I must make a more serious correction or at least express a doubt. An awful suspicion occurred to me as I was reading it over the other day. I suddenly remembered that in college I had started writing a play on this subject. Could the idea that Uncle Myers put the butterfly at my place have been suggested to me by my teacher?¹³

The fact that some experiences described in the work are doubtful or even improbable does not rob the work of its authenticity or its validity, since Mary McCarthy attempts to re-create verifiable scenes from her historical past. What validates the re-creation is the author's quest to represent the essential elements of the experience. Authenticity therefore lies in the effort to re-create that which is

¹²Eakin, 5.

¹³Mary McCarthy, *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (Florida: Harcourt Brace Javanovich Publishers, 1981) 82.

essential and is distinguished from the accidental.¹⁴ In McCarthy what is essential is the attempt to re-create through language the evil that Uncle Myers represents. The scene of the butterfly is accidental, since it is just one more manifestation of this evil, and as such the importance as to its reality is no longer significant. In this same sense Canetti's autobiography is authentic. Canetti's autobiography is more complex, as he incorporates imaginary stories or "fables" -- in their undiluted literary sense -- in the autobiographical text. I have called these episodes "stories within the story" --that is the autobiography-- as they are re-creations of imaginary tales. The "tale of the mice" which Canetti makes up for his mother, or the stories he tells his brothers while walking them to school, can be used as examples of these fables. Through these tales, Canetti is able to re-create for his reader the more creative and imaginative part of his literary persona. Canetti's autobiography also abounds in re-creations that in their very singularity bring into question their historical veracity. These re-creations are validated by their representational and paradigmatic values, and their historicity is therefore secondary in importance.

In Neruda's autobiography the case is clarified by the author himself. Neruda begins his autobiography by admitting the process of mutation that occurs in the act of translating experience into art.¹⁵ "Estas memorias o recuerdos" he writes "son intermitentes y a ratos olvidadizos porque así precisamente es la

¹⁴Theodore W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans., Knut Tarnowski and Frederick Will (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973) 7.

¹⁵Eagan 16.

vida...Muchos de mis recuerdos se han desdibujado al evocarlos, han devenido en polvo como un cristal irremediabilmente herido." ¹⁶

Neruda's acknowledgment of the effort of his conscious mind to remodel the past-- in its fragmentary existence-- into a narrative form¹⁷ results in a text that freely admits the presence of fiction. There is though a second process of fictionalization which occurs at the level of language, and which becomes one of the distinct elements of differentiation between the works I have chosen. As a literary construct the autobiography relies on language for its formal expression and it is through the manipulative power of the word that this second process of fictionalization occurs. In Canetti the "linguistic fiction" is accomplished by realistic descriptions of re-created scenes. In Neruda it takes place by the use of metaphorical language. When Canetti describes his grandfather's store in Rustschuk there is a wealth of realistic details that gives the scene a palpable effect:

Auf dem Boden standen große, offene Säcke mit verschiedenen Getreidesorten, es gab Säcke mit Hirse, mit Gerste und solche mit Reis. Ich durfte, wenn meine Hände sauber waren, hineingreifen und die Körner fühlen. Das war ein angenehmes Gefühl, ich füllte die Hand mit Körnern, hob sie hoch, roch daran und ließ die Körner

¹⁶Pablo Neruda, *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias*. (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, S.A. 1981) 9. All quotations of Neruda's work will be taken from the same edition, and noted by page number.

¹⁷Albert E. Stone, *Autobiographical Occasions and original Acts: Versions of American Identity from Henry Adams to Nate Shaw* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) 4.

langsam wieder herrunterrinnen...¹⁸

In Neruda's *Confieso que he vivido: Memorias* the use of stylized language gives scenes a poetic quality and realizes them as metaphorical of the very experience they describe. They are poetic perceptions of verifiable experiences which are transformed by their poetic language into fictional constructs.

...Los fumadores tenían a la puerta su expendio autorizado, su número y su patente...En el interior reinaba un gran silencio opaco, una inacción que amortiguaba la desdicha y endulzaba el cansancio...Un silencio caliginoso sedimento de muchos sueños truncos que hallaban su remanso... (127)

By using adjectives "caliginoso" and "opaco" to qualify "silencio" Neruda is linguistically re-creating as well as changing the scene. The stark reality of the opium den becomes, through language, a den of buffeted pain and dreams. While Canetti uses precise language to re-create a scene, Neruda in his highly poetic manner re-creates a defused copy of reality, or more precisely perhaps a metaphor of the re-called experience. He has created a fiction.

The Importance of Time in Canetti and Neruda

The notion of re-creation of "past" events directs us to the concept of

¹⁸Elias Canetti, *Die gerettete Zunge: Geschichte einer Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main: Clausen & Bosse, Leck, 1989) 11-12. All quotations of Canetti's *Die gerettete Zunge* will be taken from the same edition, and noted by page number.

"past" and therefore to time, which in autobiography seems essential.

Burton Pike has stated that the autobiographer demonstrates "an obsessive preoccupation with the chronological aspect of time."¹⁹ This obsession is pervasive and obvious throughout Canetti's work and is closely connected with Canetti's constant preoccupation with death. Aware of the temporal nature of life, and determined to prevail over death, Canetti finds in autobiography the perfect instrument to stem the corrosive nature of time. Canetti re-creates his life--in the autobiography -- through narrow linear time frames which serve the dual purpose of placing the reader into a definitive historical moment, and give the author a sense of permanence. It also gives the text a sense of veracity --as it reconfirms itself in time-- that is very important to Canetti. The preoccupation with time is also obvious in the constant need Canetti displays in documenting his life as evidenced in the works treated and Canetti's other works such as *The Voices of Marakesh* and *The Conscience of Words*.²⁰

Neruda is less obsessed with chronological time, though throughout the work there are references as to the fragility and impermanence of life. Neruda's concerns are more extensive, so that his preoccupation with time and death are less obvious. In *Confieso que he vivido: Memorias*, Neruda uses chronological time as an organizational principle, but while in Canetti time takes on the importance of a

¹⁹ Pike 327.

²⁰*The Conscience of Words* is an "autobiography of ideas" much in the manner of Pascal's *Pensées*, while *The Voices of Marakesh* can be described as a travel-log.

main character, in Neruda it is poetic language that takes its place. Neruda will start the exploration of the self not strictly through his historical birth, but rather through the description of a poetic landscape. "Comenzaré por decir," - he writes- "sobre los días y años de mi infancia, que mi único personaje inolvidable fue la lluvia." (15) In this way he sets the poetic tone of the autobiography, making it clear to his readers that the forthcoming text is important not only as the re-creation of a life, but as an explanation of his work. Neruda describes not only what happened to him at different stages of his life, but how he became--out of what he was-- what he presently is,²¹ and how his work evolved into what it is.

As an interesting point of information, we should note that although both works as autobiographies are open-ended, their textual conclusions are given with the deaths of characters that had great influence in the lives of these authors. Canetti ends *Das Augenspiel* with the death of his mother, thus bringing to a conclusion, though hardly a resolution, the most difficult relationship in his life: the love-hate mother-son relationship. Neruda brings his autobiography to a conclusion with the death of Salvador Allende, a man much loved and admired by him. Allende's death signifies the end of a history and of an ideology for Neruda. The ending, therefore, was an appropriate one. Ironically, Neruda died only a week after the Chilean president . It is as though for Neruda as well as for Canetti, death itself brings a conclusion to this otherwise open or inconclusive genre.

²¹Jean Starobinski, "The Style of Autobiography" in *Autobiography : Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 78-79.

Selectivity and Omissions

Richard Lawson has pointed out that any autobiography is selective and subjective, but that Canetti's is more so than most.²² In talking about selectivity in autobiography we are often referring, as Lawson does, to the selectivity imposed on us by our memories-- or our lack of them-- and by the conscious and somewhat manipulative effort of the autobiographer to include or avoid certain episodes of his life. I have called this latter process a "selective process of obvious omissions" since I shall only point out instances that are obviously absent in the autobiographical text.

Canetti's autobiography lacks information about his marriage to Veza and the difficult political situation that was developing in Europe with Hitler's rise to power. Neither Canetti nor any of his critics explain these omissions.

Veza is introduced in considerable detail to the reader, but she disappears from the text when Canetti marries her. Her omission can be explained if we understand Canetti's somewhat withdrawn personality and his theory of autobiography. For him this genre does not merit a very "intimate" revelation: a role that is given over to a diary. Canetti re-creates the outer world in clear pictures, but the emotional "I" is diffused and unclear.

The historical realities that he chooses to omit are somewhat harder to

²²Richard H Lawson, *Understanding Elias Canetti*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991) 11.

explain, but we must assume that they are related to his apolitical life. Though obsessed with the idea of crowds and the power that they exercise, Canetti does not manifest himself as a political thinker in the way Neruda does. Part of Neruda's poetry is dedicated to the struggle of the people of Chile and to the political ideology that he embraced. For Canetti crowds are a sociological phenomenon that merit to be studied. He had a clinical interest in them and not an emotional one. Hitler is part of a phenomenon that fascinates Canetti because of the power he exercised over crowds. He therefore becomes worthy material of study for *Masse und Macht* but not for the autobiography. The personal impact that Hitler had on Canetti's life is felt after 1936, which is the concluding date of *Das Augenspiel*. The omission therefore can be explained as not yet fitting into the linear time frame of the autobiography. Neither does Canetti write much about *Masse und Macht* -- his life consuming work--in the autobiography. The only important information that is given about this work is found in *Die Fackel im Ohr*. In the sub-chapter entitled "Der 15 July," Canetti re-creates the events that galvanized his interest in "masses," and led to his study of them. The experience itself has to be considered an epiphany since it influenced and directed Canetti's life. Through the re-creation of this experience Canetti gains an important insight into the autobiographical process. He comes to the realization that the past can not be "reduced," since particular experiences defy textualization. It is only the essence of the experience that is irreducible, and it is this very essence which later becomes text. Canetti devotes much more time in re-creating events that lead to his other less important

works. This kind of displacement is pervasive throughout his autobiography.

Neruda is very clear and discursive about the many episodes that he re-creates. We know of the impact that historical events had on him, and we are also privy to many of the relationships he had with foreign and exotic women. These inclusions helps us understand the passionate nature of the poet. What is most obviously absent in the autobiography is information about Delia del Carril—who Neruda was married to at the time he wrote the articles, and Matilde Urrutia, who was then his lover. We are simply told at one point that he has separated from Delia to marry Matilde. By omitting any details of his love affair and his divorce from the autobiography Neruda saves both women and himself some pain and embarrassment. The omission is therefore only important in that it confirms a certain sensibility in Neruda, that is not always displayed-- especially in his treatment of women.²³

The inclusion of his other many tumultuous affairs give the reader a sense

²³ In his biography of Neruda, Volodia Teitelboim says that Neruda published a book of poems,--*The Captain's Verses*-- as an anonymous work which was nonetheless immediately recognized as written by the poet . The poems were also obviously dedicated to Matilde, and Neruda was trying to save his wife from an embarrassing situation.

In her presence[Delia's], one tropical evening in Goiânia, Brazil, ...I listened to the poet arguing violently with an individual who was boasting that "you can't fool me, you're the author," while Delia's expression of feigned indifference couldn't hide the image of a lonely crushed woman shrouded in tragic gloom. For me, that scene continues to symbolize Neruda's delicate wish to avoid torturing a woman twenty years his senior.

...Those years of his double life were exhausting. Matilde had to make parallel trips with the Pablo-Delia couple in order to be with him in the shadows.

Valodia Teitelboim, *Neruda. An Intimate Biography*. trans. Beverly J. De Long-Tonelli (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991) 336.

of the sensual man that Neruda is intent in representing. Beyond dealing with the trite, omissions and inclusions serve an autobiographical function. They allow the reader to interpret the autobiographer's experiential manipulations and through them recognize certain aspects of the autobiographer's nature.

I found, in doing research on Canetti and Neruda, that the works I had chosen to study did not seem to have received much critical attention. Of all of Canetti's works, the three books that I treat in this thesis are the most readily available, nonetheless they merit scant critical attention. Most of the critical emphasis has been on *Die Blendung* and *Masse und Macht*, Canetti's most popular works. I concluded that most critics are fascinated by the peculiarities that the characters in *Die Blendung* exhibit, but seem completely indifferent to the often more unique ones that Canetti re-creates in his autobiography. I also found that some of the critics-- such as Lawson-- though certainly most helpful in easing our way into an early understanding of Canetti, have a somewhat simplistic and narrow view of his complex personality. There are some enlightening essays by critics such as Manfred Schneider or Johannes Edefelt-- who compares *Auto-da-Fé* with Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*-- , Susan Sontag and Martin Bollacher. Only Bollacher devotes an entire essay to the autobiographical works. The other critics are mainly concerned with interpreting and analyzing *Die Blendung* and *Masse und Macht*. By neglecting Canetti's autobiographical works, though, most critics miss important insights into *Die Blendung*. This novel was to become part of the

Comédie Humaine an Irren,²⁴ a work that in its scope pretended to compare with Balzac's *Comédie humaine*. Only *Die Blendung* was written. It is therefore only through the autobiographical writings, and the information that through these writings we gather, that we gain a better understanding of Canetti's work.

Neruda presents a similar problem. *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias* is a forgotten issue among the very extensive critical works on Neruda. I have used critics from Alonso through Monegal, but found that they all concentrated their critical efforts on Neruda's poetry. Only Margarita Aguirre and Gonzáles -Cruz use the *Memorias* as points of departure in their investigations. I therefore use most critical works "contextually," transferring some of their concepts and opinions about the poetry to the no less poetic work that is his autobiography. By ignoring *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias*, we are disregarding one of the most powerful tools that Neruda offers in the understanding of his poetic work. Neruda's autobiography serves as a perfect introduction to his work. The value of the book is therefore much more than anecdotal.

I have divided this thesis into four chapters. Each chapter corresponds to one book. I have subdivided them into thematic sub-chapters, which treat specific problems that arise from the study of these authors and their autobiographical works. I have introduced at times, somewhat lengthy portions of text in order to illustrate more clearly the points I was trying to clarify, since I found that to gain an understanding of these problems I needed to illustrate them. It is only through

²⁴ *Die Fackel im Ohr*, 338.

Neruda's words that I can explain his poetry. Canetti exposes many of his central conflicts in a precisely worded text. It is therefore through careful textual analysis that I have tried to show the mechanics and interpretative problems of that unique experience that is life as it turns into a literary text.

Chapter One

Elias Canetti and *Die Gerettete Zunge*

In the following chapters I shall treat the autobiographical works of Elias Canetti. The three books that comprise the autobiography, *Die gerettete Zunge*, *Die Fackel im Ohr* and *Das Augenspiel*, offer the reader a unique set of challenges. Not only must we deal with the inherent problems of this complex genre, but we must add a set of new ones.

I shall treat each of the books as an independent chapter since each refers to a specific time in the author's life and is dominated by a "thematic center" as well as a "thematic ending." I have defined as "thematic center" the main and dominant theme in each book, while the "thematic ending" refers to a point of closure as well as a departure in the author's life. Each book is distinctly developed, and the "tone" that pervades the autobiography varies from one book to the other. In *Die gerettete Zunge* the thematic center is his love-hate relationship with his mother. The ending deals with the loss of Paradise. This is not simply a metaphor, as it involves Canetti's physical departure from Zurich, a place that for him came to represent a kind of Eden. *Die Fackel im Ohr* re-creates Canetti's adolescence; its "thematic center" deals with his acquaintance and relationship with Veza and Karl Kraus. It comes to its conclusion with Canetti's emergence as a writer. *Das Augenspiel* re-creates Canetti, the writer, and ends with his mother's death. The division therefore, is not arbitrary, but follows the autobiographer's own rhythm and conclusions.

I stated in the introduction that I shall treat the autobiography as a

process of re-creation and fictionalization. In Canetti's autobiography this process is complicated by the addition of a delicate process of deliberate selectivity. This refined manner of inclusions and exclusion of characters and historical time elements contribute to make Canetti's autobiographical works what I shall call "detached" autobiographies. They create a space between the author and the reader, never letting the latter gain full knowledge of the emotional man. In *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias*, Neruda does not detail his relationship with Matilde Urrutia, the woman who will become his third wife, but the autobiography includes enough information of the author's romantic dealings with other female characters so that the reader is well aware of Neruda's sexual and emotional life. With Canetti we stay forcibly detached. We understand the writer, and the genesis of some of his works is explained, but the "man" Canetti remains obscure to us. "Upon completing as much of the autobiography as has been written," - says Richard Lawson- "the reader is apt to have the feeling that he knows very little more about the inner Canetti than he did at the outset. Lots of external facts, lots of expository discussion (in that respect like a "typical" German novel), solid erudition, interesting milieus-but little enough of self-revelation and of the wittiness that is enabled by self revelation."²⁵

The subject of selectivity and lack of self revelation can be somewhat clarified if we refer to *The Conscience of Words* and *The Human Province* both of which could be considered spiritual autobiographies. These works are "jottings"

²⁵ Lawson 11.

which at their inception were not conceived as publishable works. They are Canetti's " diaries." In an essay called "Dialogue with a Cruel Partner" from *The Conscience of Words* Canetti explains the reason for keeping diaries:

"It would be hard for me to get any further, " Canetti says, " with the things I like to do best if I sometimes didn't keep a diary. Not that I use these jottings; they are never the raw material for what I am working on. But if a man knows the vehemence of his impressions, feels every detail of every day as though it were his only day, if--one can not put it otherwise he actually consists of exaggerations, but does not fight this faculty because his goal is to emphasize, to experience the sharpness and concreteness of all things that make up a life--that man would have to either explode or otherwise burst into bits unless he could *calm down* in a diary. This calming down is perhaps the main reason why I keep a diary. It is incredible how a written sentence can calm a man."²⁶ A diary is therefore the literary construct that allows Canetti to reveal and to express himself freely. Its function is quite different from that of an autobiographical work, which, written for a public admits editing and becomes less self-revelatory. In fact, Canetti is very emphatic at this point about the function of a diary, which as publishable material becomes a "forgery."

" In a diary," says Canetti," one talks to oneself. The man that cannot do this, who sees an audience before him, even a later one, even after his death, is a forger.

²⁶Elias Canetti, *The Conscience of Words*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Seabury Press: 1979) 40.

Such forged diaries are not the issue here. They too can have their value. Some of them are incredibly fascinating: Their interest lies in the extent of the forgery: their attraction depends on the forger's talent. But what I want to focus on now is the genuine diary, which is much rarer and much more important. What meaning does it have for the writer, that is, for a man who writes a lot anyway because writing is his profession?"²⁷ The meaning that Canetti assigns to "diaries" is that of "safety valves" that allow him to release feelings and thoughts that he does not need to justify. They are therefore innately truthful and, in a sense, unadulterated experiences. In Canetti's case these "jottings" also represent the only "literary writings" that Canetti allowed himself to perform while at work on *Masse und Macht*.

"A safety valve was indispensable," says Canetti, "and I found it, at the start of 1942, in my jottings. Their freedom and spontaneity, the conviction that they existed only for their own sake and served no purpose, my irresponsibility in never reading them again or changing them in any way, saved me from a fatal paralysis."²⁸

This task which Canetti assigns to a diary--as an "intimate" account of life that does not admit an audience-- allows us to gain a better perspective on his

²⁷Canetti, *The Conscience* 44.

²⁸ Elias Canetti, *The Human Province*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: The Seabury Press 1978) V.

autobiographical works conceived for a reading audience.²⁹ We might conjecture that the "detached" tone that the autobiography often assumes, derives directly from the author's belief that an "audience" does not need to be privy to the all the intrinsic realities or truths that shape the author's life. It is a literary construct that re-creates chosen realities and as such it represents a very edited version of experience. The lack of self-revelation and the revision of experiences contributes to give the autobiography its fictional characteristics.

In the study of Canetti's autobiographical works we must also consider such problems as: time as an organizational means to the writing of the books and its connection to the author's preoccupation with death; the importance of language and its direct relation to Canetti's cultural and religious background. We must point out the importance of the sense organs in the development and organization of the autobiography as they not only appear in the titles of the works, but function as metaphors for the different stages in the author's intellectual development. We must try to explain and understand the concept of "metamorphosis" which so frequently appears in these writings, pointing out how this concept is intimately related to the author's preoccupation with death. I shall allude to the misogynist tone that often pervades the autobiography, and point out

²⁹We should point out that though Canetti's intention at the time of the writing of these "jottings" was mainly to *calm himself* and to freely express himself without the constrain of an audience, he does have a change of heart about these writings. All of them were published in his lifetime. Furthermore, in the Preface to *The Human Province* Canetti writes: "Whereas in the past, I had often felt that I would have to suffocate without the jottings, they now had their own inviolable right. The idea that I might publish some of them later on did not interfere with their freedom for the selection was uncertain and could include only a tiny portion" (V I)

Canetti's re-created "lack of understanding" in sexual matters. A brief reference to Canetti's astounding power of recall will also be made, which will allow us to deal with the problem of memory, truth, fiction and veracity in the development of the works. And lastly, and perhaps most importantly, I shall attempt to show how Canetti uses much of the autobiography as a means to deal with and resolve those inner conflicts that ultimately shaped his life. This will be especially true in *Die geretete Zunge* where most of the family relationships are treated, and where much space is devoted to the re-creation of Canetti's most difficult relationship: that with his mother.

As some of these themes or "preoccupations" blend into each other, such as the "time- death" problem, or "metamorphosis -death" theme, it will oftentimes be difficult to completely separate them, and they will share some of the text when that becomes necessary.

Time, Death and Metamorphosis

In studying the autobiography as a literary genre we have remarked that linear time is one of the essential preoccupations of the autobiographer³⁰. Canetti seems especially obsessed with chronology, and two of the three works that comprise the autobiography are strictly divided into chronological segments. " This preoccupation " says Burton Pike "seems so widespread and so acute that it suggests an essential connection with the question of why certain people feel

³⁰ Pike 326.

compelled to write about their lives. One is psycho-biological, within the individual. The other, frequently overlooked, is the role played by culture in determining the individual's conceptions of time and his sense of himself.³¹ In Canetti the psycho-biological element of this "obsession" can be directly connected with his defiance of death. The autobiography becomes an act of suppression and a means to attain a certain permanence. Linear time allows him to find coherence and organization in a chaotic world that he perceives as senseless in view of its impermanence.

Wolfgang Hädecke points out that:

" Im Aufsatz 'Dialog mit dem grausamen Partner' stellt Elias Canetti die Themen seiner (unpublizierten) Tagebücher zusammen; die Aufzählung endet: *Schließlich, und am besessensten, ist der Tod, den ich nicht anerkennen kann, obwohl ich nie von ihm absehe, den ich bishin seinen letzten Schlupfwinkel aufstöbern muß, um seine Anziehung und seinen falschen Glanz zu zerstören.* Der Superlativ am Anfang ist entscheidend: das Todes-Thema, mit ihm der radikale Aufstand gegen den Tod, ist die zentrale Obsession von Canettis Denken;"³²

Hädecke further quotes Canetti's speech on Hermann Broch in 1936, in

³¹Pike 327.

³²Wolfgang Hädecke, " Die moralische Quadratur des Zirkels. Das Todesproblem im Werk Elias Canettis" in *Text + Kritik* (München: Weber OFFst. GmbH, 1982) 27.

which he states that " Solange es den Tod gibt, ist jeder Spruch ein Widerspruch gegen ihn."³³

Thus for Canetti, time and death are intrinsically connected becoming the constants that corrupt life. It is therefore only because man is constantly threatened by his own finality that evil arises. "Also macht uns der Tod," says Canetti, " macht uns die Kürze des Lebens schlecht, und wir werden mit jedem Tod schlechter. Gäbe es den Tod nicht, könnte uns nichts wirklich mißlingen, könnten wir in immer neuen Versuchen alle Schwächen und Sünden wiedergutmachen."³⁴

The writing of the autobiography, as well as the telling of stories, become the tools which Canetti uses to arrest the corruptive influence of time and death. A text is one of the constants through which Canetti tries to attain permanence, but he furthers his attempts at immortality and finds it in the concept of "metamorphosis." Through "metamorphosis" Canetti finds a continuum of life that is otherwise denied to him. In his desire to attain permanence, Canetti considers "metamorphosis" as a complex process of change and inclusion.

To clarify the notion of " metamorphosis" a bit further, we must look at Canetti's development of this concept in the context of myths or ancient tales. Canetti explains the different aspects that "metamorphosis" can take in *Crowds and Power*. " Canetti takes "presentiment" (among bushmen) as the first stage of

³³Hädecke 27.

³⁴Hädecke 28.

"transformation " or "metamorphosis" " The most elementary thing about all of them" writes Canetti," is that *one body is equated with another*. The body of the son *is* the body of his father and so he feels the same wound in the same place. ³⁵

In *Die gerettete Zunge* we find instances that approximate this kind of transformation, especially after the death of Canetti's father . By "assuming" the role of "husband" the child incorporates the attitudes and feelings of his father and makes them his own. He therefore transforms himself into a "father-son" figure and becomes, as Lawson puts it, "more than he was."³⁶ In *Die gerettete Zunge* the metamorphosis goes through various stages. It starts with the physical replacement of the father,-- " Die stelle des Vaters vertritt das Kind...Nachts schlief ich im Bett des Vaters, neben ihrem, und wachte über ihr Leben."³⁷--and evolves into a transformation that emulates the very essence of the dead father's being.

" Nun aber waren wir jeder für den anderen," says Canetti, " was vom Vater geblieben war, wir spielten, ohne es zu wissen, beide ihn und *seine* Zartheit war es, mit der wir einander wohltaten." (75) It is in this latter attitude that we find what Canetti had defined as "presentiment."

Another aspect of "metamorphosis" involves what Canetti calls " flight transformation." In this kind of metamorphosis the prey is able to escape death by

³⁵Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York : Farrar Strauss and Giroux: 1993) 340.

³⁶Lawson 65.

³⁷ Canetti, *Die gerettete Zunge* 74.

"transforming" itself. Canetti subdivides these "transformations into "linear" or "circular," and finds examples of the first in the Georgian tale *The Master and his Apprentice*-- in which a boy tries to escape the Devil by transforming himself into different unexpected being--and of "circular" transformation in the story of Proteus and The Old Man of the Sea, taken from the *Odyssey*. In *Die gerettete Zunge* we find an episode entitled "Kako la gallinica" in which Canetti's idea of "circular transformation" is well represented. "Sie waren alle hinter ihm her, riefen "Kako! Kako!" und gackerten wie Hühner. Er fürchtete sich von Hühnern, und darum verfolgten sie ihn. Er war ihnen einige Schritte voraus und verwandelte sich unter meinen Augen selbst in ein Hun. Er gackerte heftig, aber in verzweifelter Angst, und machte mit den Armen flatternde Bewegungen.(13)³⁸

Primarily though, and strictly in the context of the autobiography, "metamorphosis" is used as a coping device to deal with the death of Canetti's father. As such it becomes the ultimate tool of transformation. It acts as a palliative and helps to ensure the life of the mother , the son and finally and most importantly it prevents the final , unequivocal death of the father.

In the autobiography " metamorphosis" can also be found as a process of

³⁸As we can see, the idea of "metamorphosis" in this section suits one of Canetti's categories fairly well. The paragraph, though, is taken out of context, so that we miss part of the "moral" issue it represents and which validates its re-creation . "Kako la gallinica" is a subtle study of cruelty, an attitude that Canetti often finds associated with mass behavior. In losing its perimeters and integrating into a larger "one," the mass --or what Canetti calls *the pack*-- becomes bolder, more energetic and less inhibited, manifesting itself as predatory and dominant. In "Kako la gallinica" the mass is represented by the children who, feeling powerful in their numbers, are able to play on the fears of a retarded person, forcing him into a transformation.

mental integration. It involves the learning influences that result in a "present being." Much as the individual is the result of his environment, Canetti charges his individuality to the integration and absorption of "many" to become the unique "one."

... das unvergleichlich Wichtigste das Aufregende und Besondere dieser Zeit waren die Leseabende mit der Mutter und die Gespräche, die sich an jede Lektüre knüpften. Ich kann diese Gespräche, nicht mehr im einzelnen wiedergeben, denn ich bestehe zum guten Teil aus ihnen. Wenn es eine geistige Substanz gibt, die man in frühen Jahren empfängt, auf die man sich immer bezieht, von der man nie loskommt, so war es diese.

...Alle spätere Einflüsse kann ich in jeder Einzelheit verfolgen. Diese aber bilden eine Einheit von unzerteilbarer Dichte. Seit dieser Zeit, also seit meinem zehnten Lebensjahr, ist es eine Art Glaubenssatz von mir, daß ich aus diesen vielen Personen bestehe, deren ich mir keineswegs bewußt bin. (105-106)

Language and social background.

Its importance in the genesis and development of the autobiography.

To understand Canetti's autobiographical works we must briefly delve into his background, since it clarifies many of his attitudes as well as explains the

impulses that led to the re-creation of his life.

Canetti was Bulgarian by birth, wrote his books in German, and lived the latter part of his life in England. These facts make it difficult to place him in a fixed geographical or national category.

Richard Lawson writes that Canetti is above all a European writer with an Austrian -Viennese background. He points out that Canetti's "Vienna-centeredness" is partly due to the tolerance that Jews experienced under the Hapsburg monarchs." Even though there was anti-Semitism," writes Lawson "Jews greatly contributed to the development of the arts and sciences in the imperial capital, and it was there that the educated middle class Jews like the Canettis came to."³⁹

Canetti endures what Susan Sontag calls a childhood "rich in displacements, and an adulthood in exile."⁴⁰ His knowledge and interest in language is almost instinctive. He "heard" Ladino, Bulgarian, and German spoken at home, and learned English and French later in life. "He has," says Susan Sontag "almost by birthright, the exile writer's easily generalized relation to place: a place is a language. And knowing many languages is a way of claiming many places as one's territory."⁴¹ Language was the means by which Canetti connected to a

³⁹Lawson 3.

⁴⁰Susan Sontag, "Mind as Passion" in *Essays in Honor of Elias Canetti*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux , 1987) 90.

⁴¹Sontag 90.

tradition, and in his selection of German as his "literary" language he made clear his particular emotional attachment to it.

Canetti chose to write in German—even though he became a Jewish refugee-- because for him it was the "language of love." It was the language that his parents used when they spoke to each other affectionately, or when they referred to subject matters that the children were not supposed to understand. It had sexual overtones and it was exclusionary when used as such. But it also became the most intimate link between mother and son. It was their connecting tissue, much in the manner it had been between husband and wife. And, as the relationship between mother and son was so conflicted and difficult, but also so intimate, the use of German became a tribute to this very relationship.

We may also agree with Susan Sontag that in his use of German Canetti confirms his placelessness--in a sense his universality--, and more importantly perhaps, his loyalty to German culture .⁴² As German becomes the language that connects him to German culture so Ladino is the language that links him to his Sephardic- Jewish heritage. In this sense, language is a means of integration into an entire culture as well as a means of communication.

For Canetti *language* (not a language) is intimately associate with his "obsession with death". He subscribes to the ancient belief that language has extraordinary-- almost magical-- powers which can be used as tools to heal the sick and restore life to the dying. This ancient belief is given as the reason for the

⁴²Sontag 90-91.

very inception of the autobiography, or more precisely *Die gerettete Zunge*.

"Für Elias Canetti" says Witte, " scheint derselbe Glaube[of the magical powers of language] noch heute ungemindert Gültigkeit zu besitzen, so daß er ihm zum innersten Antrieb seines autobiographischen Schreibens werden kann. In einem seiner seltenen Interviews berichtet er über die intensive Beziehung zu seinem jüngsten Bruder Georges und erwähnt dabei den direkten Einfluß, den dieser auf seine Schriften gehabt habe: In seiner letzten Krankheit beschloß ich für ihn, und damit es vielleicht für seine Krankheit zur Hilfe reichen könnte, unsere Kindheit zu schreiben. Das habe ich ihm noch gesagt; das Buch, das so entstand, heist *Die gerettete Zunge* ! Ich konnte ihm leider nicht mehr die Anfänge des Buches zeigen. Er starb vorher. Das Buch ist ihm gewidmet und würde ohne ihn nicht bestehen ." ⁴³

The association of language and death is established in Canetti's mind after the death of his father, when this tragedy becomes deeply associated with what is known as the "grandfather's curse." This episode occurs as Canetti's father decides to leave Bulgaria and emigrate to England, and the grandfather curses him for it. As Canetti's father dies shortly after the family's arrival in Manchester, the death and the curse become intrinsically connected in the child's mind, a fact that is reinforced by frequent outside references to this curse. Thus *language*-- the power of the word-- becomes for Canetti a multifaceted instrument whose power

⁴³Bernd Witte, " Der Erzähler als Tod-Feind. Zu Elias Canettis Autobiographie." *Text + Kritik* (München : Weber OFFSt. GmbH, 1982) 64.

is awesome. Canetti understands language's manipulative powers and in it he finds a force which can change destinies.

The Titles

Canetti uses a sense organ in the title of each of his autobiographical works. "Each sense organ reflects or embodies a key autobiographical detail of the given volume, as well as a more pervasive symbolism."⁴⁴ In the first volume of the autobiography "die Zunge" alludes to the initial "memory" described in the book, in which the "tongue" of the child is literally "gerettet" or saved from being cut off- which would have rendered the child mute- as well as the process of "language" as a means of communication, social integration and learning. The salvaging of the tongue becomes a metaphor for the saving of "language." In *Die gerettete Zunge* all the communication involving growth is accomplished through the ability to speak, while all emotional links are established through language. Language, and therefore--the tongue--, is also used as a metaphor for the writer's ability to express that which the imagination creates. In this volume, Canetti re-creates the education of a future writer. He describes his first dabbling in imaginary landscapes, so that we gain an insight into the active mechanism of a creative mind. *Die gerettete Zunge* therefore can be taken as a symbol for the saving of an entire process of thinking as well as the active verbalization of this very process.

The second volume, *Die Fackel im Ohr*, is connected to the idea of hearing. *Die Fackel* is a reference to Karl Kraus' journal *Die Fackel*, and to

⁴⁴Lawson 12.

Canetti's attending and listening to Kraus's satirical speeches. The importance of the spoken word, its powers of persuasion and indoctrination, are pervasive themes in this volume. It is in *Die Fackel im Ohr* that Canetti re-creates his relationship with Veza, the woman who will eventually become his wife. Lawson remarks that in his relationship with Veza, Canetti learns to listen and to comprehend the words of others. This, he says, comprises the beginning of tolerance. Kraus and his message, on the other hand, will embody the idea of intolerance. In *Die Fackel im Ohr* Canetti re-examines Kraus's public readings, realizing that his spoken words are originally the words of the objects of his satires. What he does then, Lawson says, is to damn his adversaries out of their own mouths. In doing so, Kraus is pandering to the innate human predisposition to intolerance. Thus tolerance/intolerance are products-or maybe functions-of the acoustically received word.⁴⁵ Thus "listening" and "hearing" become an important part of a writer's education.

In *Die Fackel im Ohr* "hearing" and by extension the ear, becomes the primary means of learning and of apprehending the world. Canetti conceives his ideas of "acoustic masks" by a process in which only the uttered word shapes reality. The shape behind the sound becomes inconsequential. It is the utterance, the formation of ideas and the process of learning "to hear" that gains importance because of its very close relationship to language. "Die Hypothese von der Bedeutung, die Canetti den Zuhören für die eigene Entwicklung beimißt," says

⁴⁵Lawson 12.

Scheichl, " wird auch durch die Analyse seiner Äußerungen über Sprache in den beiden autobiographischen Büchern gestützt. Eine solche Analyse ergibt nämlich, daß er sich weniger für *Sprache* als *parole* oder *langue* interessiert als für *Sprache* als *langage*, als Sprachfähigkeit, als Voraussetzung der Kommunikation, damit als Mittel des Zugangs zu anderen Menschen.⁴⁶

Das Augenspiel is an exercise not simply in looking, but in seeing. The visual dominates the other two senses, though all the senses remain important throughout the works. In *Das Augenspiel*, Canetti also develops and re-creates for the reader the creative process that will ultimately result in *Die Blendung*, or as he then called the novel, *Kant fängt Feuer*. But it is the visual, the "seeing" of Doctor Sonne, the making of acquaintances such as James Joyce, Musil, Wotruba or Canetti's infatuation with Anna Mahler that are all "sketched" in this volume. It is, of the three volumes, the one that deals least with the writer "Canetti", but that paints most eloquently the pictures of the artists of the times. The autobiography becomes a document of a time and of an artistic milieu and serves to give the reader a view and a perspective of that time, as seen and perceived through the eyes of the autobiographer.

⁴⁶Sigurd Paul Scheichl, "Zu den Autobiographischen Büchern Canettis, in *Elias Canetti. Blendung als Lebensform*, Hrsg. Friedbert Aspetsberger und Gerald Stieg (Königstein: Athenäum, 1985) 77.

Die gerettete Zunge: Early Childhood

Die gerettete Zunge is a careful re-creation of Canetti's childhood . It is a subjective recollection that deals with very complex psychological issues. *Die gerettete Zunge* is a study of relationships. Canetti re-creates with painful details the love-hate relationship with his mother; the many psychological struggles that ensued from this relationship, and his life long conflict with her. We find descriptions of his father's death and the traumatic results of this loss, and we become acquainted with many colorful characters who influenced Canetti's life, such as his paternal grandfather, uncles and cousins . There are other character "sketches" that shall be dealt with as they help us gain an understanding of the world that Canetti is trying to recapture. They represent the "key" to issues that Canetti is trying to resolve.

Die gerettete Zunge encompasses the time period between 1905 and 1911 and is subtitled *Geschichte einer Jugend*. In this part of the autobiography episodes are carefully segmented into historical time blocks. These time blocks serve to place the author in a specific historical moment, helping to re- enforce the idea of careful re-creation or historical veracity. *Die gerettete Zunge* is dedicated to Canetti's younger brother George who died in 1917, and who "inspired" the autobiography. It is in this part of the autobiography that Canetti explores his Jewish as well as his Sephardic background and where many of the traditional festivities are faithfully re-created. These recollections are important parts of the

text, as they become the means by which many of Canetti later attitudes can be explained. His disregard for money, for example, can be traced directly to the family's heavy emphasis on it. His dislike of commerce is an outgrowth of his negative experiences with his uncles.

Though Canetti begins writing *Die gerettete Zunge* to save his brother George from death, the re-creation evolves into a cathartic experience. Canetti uses this part of the autobiography to discharge his conflicting emotions towards his mother, and to find through the re-creation of his past an explanation for his attitudes and emotions. Writing becomes a reconciliation and a purging. This sense of catharsis occurs primarily in *Die gerettete Zunge*, as it is here where the re-creation revolves mainly around his mother, and where episodes that had great psychological impact on Canetti are re-created. We can use the "German lesson" as an example of this "catharsis." Canetti seems to find some healing elements in his quest to understand his mother's attitude towards him. It is through his understanding of her behavior that Canetti learns to accept his mother and in the re-creation tries to portray her intelligence and caring as well as her harshness.

Canetti begins the autobiography by recreating his first memory, an important if somewhat conventional manner of opening the work. In doing so he follows an autobiographical convention and he adds an extra dimension to this open ended work. He points to one of the most important aspects that we must consider in autobiography: that of the function of memory and consequently the fictionalization of events. A "first memory" is an important re-creation in the

autobiographical enterprise. "Locke tells us that personal identity coexists with these memories;" says Folkenflik "Freud tells us that what we remember as our first memory will be significant because we have remembered it, that we will remember it because, even if distorted, it has a special significance."⁴⁷ For Canetti this first memory-- as a first episode in the autobiography-- will be used as a clarification for the title of the book as well as a metaphor for the saving of an entire system of communication: speech and language.

Meine früheste Erinnerung ist in Rot getaucht. Auf dem Arm eines Mädchens komme ich zu einer Tür heraus, der Boden vor mir ist rot, und zur Linken geht eine Treppe hinunter, die ebenso rot ist. Gegenüber von uns, in selber Höhe, öffnet sich eine Tür und ein lächelnder Mann tritt heraus, der freundlich auf mich zugeht. Er tritt ganz nahe an mich heran, bleibt stehen und sagt zu mir: "Zeig die Zunge!" Ich strecke die Zunge heraus, er greift in seiner Tasche, zieht ein Taschenmesser hervor, öffnet es und führt die Klinge ganz nahe an meine Zunge heran. Er sagt: "Jetzt schneiden wir ihm die Zunge ab." Ich wage es nicht, die Zunge zurückzuziehen. Er kommt immer näher, gleich wird er sie mit der Klinge berühren.

Im letzten Augenblick zieht er das Messer zurück, sagt: "Heute

⁴⁷ Folkenflik 17.

John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover, 1959) vol.1, 449.

Sigmund Freud, "A Childhood Recollection from *Dichtung und Wahrheit*" in *Character and Culture*, ed. Philip Rieff (New York: Collier Books, 1963) 192.

noch nicht, morgen." Er klappt das Messer wieder zu und steckt es in seine Tasche...Ich weiß, daß er sie mir abschneiden wird und fürchte mich jedesmal mehr. (7)

This scene is fertile ground for a Freudian interpretation of "childhood trauma." Though it is not described as a dream, but a memory, it has nonetheless a very dream-like quality-- or more precisely, it reads like a nightmare. As an introduction, this scene also serves to set up a certain linguistic style. The language is clear and descriptive and there is an abundance of details in these descriptions. Canetti, though, leaves the scene open to many interpretative possibilities.

The scene works on two levels of language, one literal and the other implicit. The repetition of the word "Rot" immediately conjures up in the reader's mind the idea of "blood," a connotation that is validated by the figure of the man with the knife. The traumatic effect of this "memory" is clarified by the constant threat that the child feels of losing his tongue. The word tongue itself functions on dual levels: the realistic (tongue as an organ of speech), and figurative or metaphoric (tongue as language). The word "gerettet" too has a twofold implication, since the "saving" involves not only an organ but an entire way of communication. The metaphoric value of the scene can be extended if we concede that by "saving the tongue" we have also saved the entire "oral tradition," an important tool--at least for Canetti--in the conception of many of his works.⁴⁸

⁴⁸The English version of the work, *The Tongue Set Free*, misses some of the nuances that the word "gerettet" brings with it, but interestingly adds some of its own. By Canetti's own admission, he had not told anyone about this experience till much later in life. He had not

MOTHER

The most important figure in Canetti's childhood is his mother. She exercises the strongest influence on him, so that all other portraits pale when compared to her. She is not only responsible for his intellectual growth, but also is the creator and fomenter of one of the more complex relationships in Canetti's life. It is in this early part of *Die gerettete Zunge* that Canetti starts re-creating this love-hate relationship which continues throughout his life, thus giving us one of the most detailed character studies in his entire work. "Elias Canettis Bild von ihr [the mother] ist," says Edfelt, "eine der eigentümlichsten Menschenstudien, mit denen man Bekanntschaft stiften kann. Sie hat sich gegen die Schläge des Lebens panzern müssen, sie ist ungeheuer dominant, ihr Hohn kann geradezu scheußliche Formen annehmen-doch zugleich ist sie imponierend in ihrem Bestreben, die Grenzen ihrer eigenen Bildungswelt zu erweitern und den Sohn daran teilhaben zu lassen."⁴⁹

Johannes Edfelt also remarks on the honesty with which Canetti tries to

"repressed" it, but being afraid of the "threat" he had simply kept it to himself. When he finally told his mother about this recurring "memory" she reminded him of a vacation that they had taken, in which a nanny was brought along to take care of him. This woman would secretly meet her boy-friend, and would take the child along on these meetings. It was this man, who threatened the child with a knife in order to keep him silent, whom Canetti sees in his dreams. Canetti's mother also reminded him that the carpets in the hotel were red. By validating the "historical reality" of the "memory" Canetti was able to put this memory in its correct historical perspective. Through this revelation the dream lost its nightmarish quality, but most importantly, it freed him from a fear that had bound him for years. It allowed him to speak, to communicate and with it to write.

⁴⁹Johannes Edfelt, "Vorstellungen Elias Canetti" in *Hüter der Verwandlung. Beiträge zum Werk von Elias Canetti*. (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1985) 129.

portray this relationship. "Das Verhältnis zur Mutter ist " says Edfelt, "ein Kardinalthema in Canettis Erinnerungsbuch. In all seiner Ambivalenz, in seiner Mischung aus Haß und Liebe, ist es von einer in jeder Schattierung überzeugenden Wahrhaftigkeit durchdrungen."⁵⁰

Because this complex mother -son relationship evolves mainly through their need for each other as well as their love and hate, I have called it a "motherly affliction." This term should not be confused with the Freudian "Oedipus complex." The main difference between them is not one of simple semantics, but of attitude. Canetti's relationship with his mother evolves from their *common* need to replace the father--it is here that the notion of metamorphosis comes in--and it involves a very complex mixture of emotions. It is love, hate, and an intense need for power and domination. These feelings are equally true for Canetti and for his mother. It is this intensely combative as well as needful relationship that I have called a "motherly affliction."⁵¹ Dagmar Barnouw's writes that: "Die Geschichte der Jugend nach dem Tode des Vaters könnte als die Geschichte einer anti-ödipalen Bindun gelesen werden."⁵² This statement oversimplifies the relationship since it only considers Canetti's bond to his mother, but leaves out of consideration all the feelings that Canetti professes to have for those who threaten to take the part of his dead father. In Canetti there is, as it were, a displaced "Oedipus." In

⁵⁰Edfelt 129.

⁵²Dagmar Barnouw, *Elias Canetti*. (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979) 5.

calling Canetti's problem a "motherly affliction" I am considering the relationship towards his mother as well as his reaction to his mother's relationships with men.

There are repeated episodes in the autobiography which illustrate this tendency and will help clarify the concept in its multifaceted nature. It is in connection with this "motherly affliction" that we shall be able to identify issues that contributed to the choices that Canetti makes as a writer and as a man, as they become outgrowth of this basic relationship. We find the inception of the problematic relationship unfolded after the father's death as the child is compelled to replace him emotionally. In order to accomplish and revive the relationship his parents had, Canetti is forced to learn German, since that had been his parents' secret language of love. German becomes a special link between mother and son.

Ich spürte, daß ich ihr wieder nahe war, wie in jenen Wochen nach dem Tod des Vaters. Erst später begriff ich, daß es nicht nur um meinetwillen geschah, als sie mir Deutsch unter Hohn und Qualen beibrachte. Sie selbst hatte ein tiefes Bedürfnis danach, mit mir Deutsch zu sprechen, es war die Sprache ihres Vertrauens. Der furchtbare Schnitt in ihrem Leben, als sie 27-jährig das Ohr meines Vaters verlor, drückte sich für sie am empfindlichsten darin aus, daß ihr Liebesgespräch auf deutsch mit ihm verstummt war. In dieser Sprache hatte sich ihre eigentliche Ehe abgespielt. Sie wußte sich keinen Rat, sie fühlte sich ohne ihn verloren, und versuchte so rasch wie möglich, mich an seine Stelle zu setzen. (86)

This passage gives the reader a fairly clear portrait of the mother. By saying "ich spürte, daß ich ihr wieder nahe war" Canetti is alluding to his mother's changeable nature. The word "wieder" indicates the change. By describing her didactic methods as "Hohn und Qualen" the reader get a fairly clear image of the mother's didactic methods, which render her as an unsympathetic and unfeeling woman, an image that is instantly changed by Canetti's description of his mother's suffering and needs. Canetti's ambivalence, which pervades the relationship, is captured in this passage. Many of the passages re-created are used by Canetti to justify his mother. He describes her harsh nature and immediately follows the description with a more benign image of her so that the passages ultimately become tributes to his mother.

A direct outgrowth of Canetti's relationship with his mother is the use of German as his literary language. "Es muß auch den Hang zum Schreiben früh in mir genährt haben," says Canetti, "denn um des Erlernens des Schreibens willen hatte ich das Buch abgewonnen und die plötzliche Wendung zum Besseren begann eben damit, daß deutsche Buchstaben schreiben lernte. Sie duldeten keineswegs, daß ich die anderen Sprachen aufgab, Bildung bestand für sie in den Literaturen aller Sprachen, die sie kannte, aber die Sprache unserer Liebe-und was war es für eine Liebe!- wurde Deutsch. (87)

Canetti uses the autobiography to clarify many aspects of the self in its relation to the other. The autobiographical text therefore becomes a tool through which the author tries to gain an understanding of himself, his mother and the

relationship that bound them. In trying to interpret this relationship Canetti introduces the concept of "retrospection." It is through retrospection--the time between the experience and the creation of the text--that Canetti can re-evaluate experiences and gain an understanding of his life and of his actions.

"Wir verbrachten drei Monate in Lausanne und manchmal denke ich," writes Canetti, "eine so folgenreiche Zeit hat es in meinem Leben nie wieder gegeben. Aber das denkt man öfter, wenn man ernsthaft eine Zeit ins Auge faßt, und es ist wohl möglich, daß jede Zeit die wichtigste ist und jede alles enthält."

(91)

The important point, in the context of the autobiography, is Canetti's own admission of the effects of retrospection. If the autobiography recreates events, it does so through distance in time. This distance, which we shall call retrospection, can change, not the event itself, but the perception that we have of it, so that elements become more or less important according to the distance that we create. It is here too that the fictional landscape of the autobiography is put into place, since the lived moment is transposed and transformed through this backward look into one's life.

The expression "wenn man ernsthaft eine Zeit ins Auge faßt," has multiple connotations. The word "Zeit" and "Auge" bring us from the past-- and childhood-- into a present adulthood. And it is, according to Canetti, precisely through the eye that we learn in our adult life, as we have gained a "backward look" into our experiences. Just as in infancy we must learn to explore the world through

language, and in our young years we learn by listening, so in adulthood we comprehend life by looking either to the future or backwards into our past.⁵³

There is also a prospective aspect of retrospection that must be considered, since we can only realize the possibilities of life in the context of what "has been."

There are other re-creations in the autobiography in which this concept is put into place. The chosen passages are important re-creations through which Canetti tries to understand and justify the actions of his mother. The sections entitled "Verbotsbereitschaft" and "Das verworfene Paradies" deal with "taboos." The first one, refers to the prohibition --in the Jewish religion--against eating pork. The second episode deals with Canetti's mother forbidding him to love animals.

To understand the first "taboo," we must consider his mother's attitude towards the Jewish religion. Though not an atheist, she could not intellectually accept a religion that considered women "inferior," and whose laws she did not understand. "Als Frau, die immer abseits sitzen mußte," writes Canetti, "hatte sie nicht viel übrig für den Kult im Tempel, beten bedeutete ihr nichts und lesen konnte ihr nur wichtig sein, wenn sie verstand, was sie las. Für Shakespeare brachte sie die Inbrunst auf, die sie für ihren Glauben nie empfunden hatte. (101)

This disinterest and lack of understanding for religious laws prompts her to disregard mandates that she considers trivial, and to impose on her son these same

⁵³This nuance of language is missed in the English translation where it is simply translated as "But one often thinks that when focusing seriously on a period," 74

disregards.⁵⁴ The connection between this taboo and the eating of pork is given in the context of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, so that in the child's mind the punishment for breaking the rule is a very harsh one. The mother's method for breaking the taboo is not only cruel, but sadistic.

Nicht lange danach nahmen wir zu dritt, Mutter, Gouvernante und ich, im Speisezimmer das Mittagessen ein. Es gab ein rötliches Fleisch, das ich nicht kannte, es war sehr salzig und schmeckte mir gut. Ich wurde zu noch einem Stück davon aufgemuntert, das ich gerne aß. Dann sagte die Mutter in unschuldigen Ton: "Das hat dir doch geschmeckt, nicht wahr?" "O ja, sehr gut, kriegen wir das bald wieder?" "Das war Schweinefleisch", sagte sie. Ich dachte, sie verspottete, aber es war ihr Ernst. Ich spürte, wie mir übel wurde, ging hinaus und erbrach mich. Sie nahm davon wenig Notiz. (256)

The second episode, which is described towards the end of the book, can be used as an example of what I shall call a "methodology of insensitivity." That is, the mother will employ any means she deems necessary to impose her views on

⁵⁴ His mother's lack of understanding of the Jewish religion was due to the teaching methods used. Hebrew was taught phonetically, therefore, words became meaningless sounds. Being intellectually inquisitive, this method of learning was unacceptable to her.

Canetti writes:

Wohl lernte man Hebräisch lesen und ratschte die Gebete aus den Büchern fließendherunte. Aber wir wußten nicht, was die Worte, die wir lasen, bedeuteten, niemand fiel es ein, sie uns zu erklären. Auch die Geschichten der Bibel wurden uns nicht nahegebracht. Einziges Ziel der Schule war es, uns fließendes Lesen der Gebetbücher beizubringen, damit die Väter oder Großväter im Tempel Ehre mit uns einlegten. (101)

her child. It will show the tension that has developed in their relationship, as young Canetti struggles to become a free individual, with a set of ideas that do not always concur with his mother's thinking. The autobiography in this instance, serves the twofold purpose of explaining the mother and the author himself. It will describe for the reader the intricate psychological process of creation and formation, as it were, of Canetti, the man.

Noch weniger mochte sie mein Mitgefühl für Tiere. Ihre Abneigung dagegen war so groß, daß sie sich die grausamsten Späße mit mir erlaubte. In Kandersteg, auf der Straße vor unserem Hotel, sah ich ein ganz junges Kalb, das fortgezerrt wurde. Es sperrte sich bei jedem Schritt,...ich begriff nicht, was vor sich ging, sie stand daneben und erklärte mir seelenruhig, daß es zum Schlachten forgeschleppt wurde.

Gleich danach war es Zeit zur Table d'Hôte, wir setzten uns zum Essen nieder, ich weigerte mich, Fleisch zu essen. (309)

This re-creation in itself is astounding in the way it captures the cold willfulness of the mother and her lack of consideration for the child's feelings. The word "seelenruhig" conveys this lack perfectly. There is nothing in her "soul" that revolts at the sight of a calf being lead to its death. She displays a cold calmness since she disapproves of her son's love of animals. Canetti's abhorrence of death is instinctive, while for the mother only human death is tragic. In her intent to instill this principle in the young boy she appears ruthless and uncaring. Also at play here

is the battle between two strong-willed people. Canetti's refusal to eat meat and his subsequent compliance to her will, become a metaphor for their relationship.

Tage hielt ich daran fest, sie ärgerte sich; ich nahm mir Senf zu Gemüse, da sagte sie lächelnd: "Weißt du, wie man das macht? Zu Senf braucht man Hühnerblut." Damit verwirrte sie mich, ich durchschaute ihren Hohn nicht; als ich begriff, hatte sie meinen Widerstand gebrochen und sagte: " So ist es. Du bist wie das Kalb, das muß sich schließlich auch ergeben." Ihre Mittel waren nicht wählerisch. (309)

Canetti brings a "resolution" or a finality to the scene by using short and emphatic sentences : "Ihre Mittel waren nicht wählerisch." and " Sie nahm davon wenig Notiz." They clarify the picture of his mother, giving us the portrait of a fairly irascible woman. Canetti, though, will soften this portrait with other episodes in which her more humane side is shown, thus bringing a certain balance to her portrayal. In his re-creations Canetti is intent on representing his mother's harsh nature as well as her sensitivity. He thus justifies to himself--and his reader--his rebellion and hate, but ultimately his love for his mother.

In the following scene he offers us an image of the mother's softer nature. " Einmal erlebte ich sie fassungslos, " writes Canetti, " es ist meine stummste Erinnerung an sie und das einzige Mal, daß ich sie auf der Straße weinen sah, sie war sonst so beherrscht, um sich öffentlich gehenzulassen." (195). This emotional outburst is brought about by the sight of soldiers who had been wounded in war,

and it is depicted here because it gives Canetti an "entry" to the development of one of the main problems that he is concerned about, the problem of death. The notion of death and its finality pervade much of the text of the autobiography, so that it is often difficult to isolate or disregard, even when it appears as a sub-text.

The "Schwerverletzten" is a multifaceted episode in which Canetti is able to incorporate the notion of death and his aversion to war, as well as show man in his confused paradoxical world. In this act of re-creating, the writing has, as Watson says, " the power not just to record the words but to evoke the fullness of the subject."⁵⁵

Sie gingen viel langsamer als andere Menschen, und es dauerte, so kam es mir vor, eine Ewigkeit, bis sie aneinander vorüber waren. Einer der Franzosen drehte sich noch zurück, hob seine Krücke in die Luft, fuchtelte ein wenig mit ihr und rief den Deutschen, die nun schon vorüber waren, zu "Salut!" Ein Deutscher, der es gehört hatte, tat es ihm nach, auch er hatte eine Krücke, mit der er fuchtelte, und gab den Gruß auf französisch zurück: "Salut!" Man könnte denken, wenn man das hört, daß die Krücken *drohend* geschwungen wurden, aber es war keineswegs so, man zeigte einander zum Abschied noch, was einem gemeinsam geblieben war: Krücken.

(195-96.)

⁵⁵Folkenflik 63.

The word "Krücken" synthesizes all the horrors of war. This section is used as a lesson and as a reproach. For Canetti, war is the ultimate taboo, since it is an instrument of mass destruction and an act of will. It is man's willful decision to act against his fellow man, which makes war cruel and unacceptable for Canetti.⁵⁶

It is also important to note that Canetti uses the autobiography to explain to his reader's the genesis of many of his attitudes. Jealousy and its genesis, which arises in relation to his mother, and which is the only emotion that Canetti dwells on, is extensively re-created in the autobiography. Outbursts of jealousy and their consequent explications are not isolated scenes in the autobiography, but in their recurrence become one of the sub-texts or subplots of the work. What Canetti admits to-- aided by his profound knowledge of Shakespeare--, is an "Othellian jealousy. "

" Damals", writes Canetti," setzte die Eifersucht ein, die mich mein Leben lang gequält hat, und die Gewalt, mit der sie mich überkam, hat mich für immer geprägt. Sie wurde zu meiner eigentlichen Leidenschaft, die sich um Überzeugungen und besseres Wissen nicht im geringstentscherte." (143)

Was aber soll ich über Eifersucht denken? Ich kann sie weder billigen noch verdammen, ich kann sie nur verzeichnen. Sie war so früh ein Teil meiner Natur,

⁵⁶ Hädecke 29.

The genesis of Canetti's aversion to war can be traced to his father's death which occurred at the outbreak of the Balkan War. " Seit damals hat es in der Welt Krieg gegeben" says Canetti "und jeder wo immer es war, und im Bewußtsein meiner Umgebung vielleicht kaum gegenwärtig, traf mich mit der Kraft jenes frühen Verlusts und beschäftigte mich als das *Persönlichste*, das mir geschehen konnte. (72)

daß es Fälschung wäre, darüber zu schweigen. Sie hat sich immer gemeldet, wenn ein Mensch mir wichtig wurde, und nur wenige unter solchen gab es, die nicht darunter zu leiden hatten.(193)

In this admission and in further descriptions of his feelings about his mother's friendship with the "Herr Dozent," Canetti emulates his father's behavior, and has his reader mentally return to his father's death. This process, within the process of self- representation, serves as a process of self-exploration or re-interpretation. This section of the autobiography becomes "introspective." The author's feelings are represented in a direct manner, and not as a reflection of someone else's attitude. There is a subjective re-creation in this part of the work that lets us penetrate into the psychological and emotion life of the author, something that is not always possible in Canetti's autobiography.

The next section that I have chosen to analyze will serve to clarify the "motherly affliction" as well as the displaced Oedipal aspect of the mother-son relationship .

Ich wußte nicht, was zwischen Mann und Frau geschieht, doch wachte ich darüber, daß nichts geschehe. Wenn er sich zu weit vorbeugte, dachte ich, er wolle sie Küssen, obwohl das , schon wegen der Stellung des Teetisches zwischen ihnen , ganz unmöglich gewesen wäre. Von seinen Worten und Sätzen verstand ich nichts, das einzige, was ich zu hören vermeinte, war, selten genug, ein "Aber verehrteste Gnädigste!" Es klang nachhaltig und

protestierend, als habe sie ihm ein Unrecht getan und ich freute mich darüber. Am schlimmsten war es, wenn er lange nichts sagte, dann wußte ich, daß sie ihm etwas Längeres erzählte und - nahm an, sie sprächen über mich. Dann wünschte ich, daß der Balkon einstürzte und er unten auf dem Pflaster zerschmettert liegen bleibe. Es fiel mir nicht ein-vielleicht weil ich sie nicht sah, daß sie ja mit ihm abgestürzt wäre. Nur was ich sehen konnte, er, nur er, sollte abstürzen. Ich stellte mir vor, wie er unten lag und die Polizei mich fragen kam." Ich habe ihn heruntergestürzt" würde ich sagen, "er hat meiner Mutter die Hand geküßt."(144-45)

This passage is an intense and perceptive psychological study of a child's exaggerated emotions towards his mother. And, as it is rendered through the retrospective mirror of time, it gives us a more precise sense of its hyperbole. Stylistically the scene is set up as dualities following a course of "actions" and "reactions" that play on each other. "Ich wußte nicht, was zwischen Mann und Frau geschieht" (sexual ignorance) says Canetti, and adds "doch wachte ich darüber, daß nichts geschehe." (making sure that this "nothing" he does not know does not happen!) This kind of duality, which can be observed throughout the passage, mirrors the child's feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. But most importantly, as the passage is a "re-creation," it admits elements that were absent at their historical time: a sense of exaggeration and even ridiculousness. The narrator though, never loses sight of the suffering "I" (the child) nor of the "Herr

Dozent."

The displaced Oedipal element in the paragraph can be summarized in the word "Zerschmettert," in which all the hatred and *wish* for the death of the pseudo-father figure can be found.

I shall treat one more scene that recreates the "motherly affliction," noting that the situation is self-critical and self mocking in its exaggerated mode.

Though the scene describes a time of suffering and uneasiness for the young child, the descriptions are so vividly self-deprecating that much of the gravity is lost in the sheer absurdity of the situation.

Schon bei der Ankunft in München brach das Unglück wieder über mich herein. Er war *vor* uns angekommen und erwartete uns am Bahnhof. Wir sahen beide zum Coupéfenster hinaus, mit dem selben Gedanken, aber ich war es, der den schwarzen Bart auf dem Perron zuerst entdeckte....

Man sagte mir nicht, wo sein Zimmer sei, ich nahm an, daß es sich auf demselben Stockwerk befinden müsse und fürchtete, es könnte dem unseren zu nahe sein. Ich wollte herausfinden, wo dieses Zimmer war, und lauerte ihm auf, als er sein Schlüssel verlangte... Er bog noch um eine Ecke und stand endlich vor seiner Tür, before er den Schlüssel ins Schloß steckte, hörte ich ihn seufzen. Er seufzte laut und ich war sehr erstaunt--nie hätte ich erwartet, daß ein solcher Mann seufzte...

Vor mir hieß sie "meine Gnädigste" oder "meine verehrte Gnädigste", doch traute ich diese Anrede nicht und war entschlossen, ihn über eine unerlaubte Nennung ihres Namens zu Rede zu stellen. Ich sah mich, wie ich die Tür plötzlich aufriß, auf ihn zusprang und ihn anherrschte: " Was unterstehen Sie Sich?" Ich riß ihm die Brille herunter und zertrat sie in ganz kleine Stücke: " Sie sind ein Kurpfuscher, sie sind kein Arzt! Ich habe sie entlarvt! Verlassen Sie sofort dieses Hotel oder ich übergebe Sie der Polizei!" (150-152)

By using the word "Unglück" and italicizing "*vor*" the reader is set up in a landscape that is painted in exaggerated colors as well as minimalist strokes. The word " Unglück" serves to tell us the mental frame of the child. We understand that the only "tragedy" in this situation is the one perceived by the child. It is a controlling fear of loss. The comedy in the subchapter is found in the exaggerated motions of the "Herr Professor," and in the grandiose mental play that Canetti weaves. Even the title of this sub-chapter, " Der Bart im Bodensee," is used to reduce the person of the professor to a " black beard," robbing him of all dignity and authority, and rendering him as poignantly comical. The entire subchapter is a re-creation of hyperactivity and obsession, and one that ends in an exaggerated gesture of "filial love."

"Jedzt wandte ich mich zur Mutter," writes Canetti, " ich hatte Angst, daß sie weine, aber sie weinte nicht, wir fielen uns in die Arme, wir lagen uns in den

Armen, sie fuhr mir, was sie nie sonst tat, über die Haare und sagte so weich wie ich sie nie gehört hatte:" Jetzt ist alles gut. Jetzt ist alles gut." Sie sagte es so oft, daß ich dann noch zu weinen begann, obwohl mir gar nicht danach zumute war."
(155)

One of the most interesting texts that we find in *Die gerettete Zunge* is the episode entitled "Die Mäuse-Kur." In it Canetti depicts another aspect of his mother's complex character, but more importantly perhaps, he touches on the important theme of creativity. The re-created story is a tale that young Canetti weaves to destroy his mother's fear of mice. It is therefore, a fiction within the fictional structure of the autobiography and it serves as an illustration of Canetti's imaginative creativity. It is therefore important as a documentation of character, but more so as text.

Canetti writes "Von Mäusen wurde die Mutter schwach und verlor jede Beherrschung." (258) The words "schwach" and " Beherrschung" immediately alert the reader as to the unusual behavior of his mother, who has often been described as strong willed , brave and controlled. With this simple introduction the reader is perfectly situated and is shown the inappropriateness and somewhat comical aspect of the situation.

Später, in der Schweiz, wann immer wir Hotelzimmer bezogen, war ihre erste Frage an das Stubenmädchen, dem sie zu diesem Zweck eigens klingelte, ob es hier Mäuse gebe. Mit einfachen Antworten gab sie sich nicht zufrieden, sie fragte auf mehrere, für die

Antwortende verfängliche Weisen, um ihr auf Widersprüche zu kommen. Ganz besonderen Wert legte sie darauf zu erfahren, wann die letzte Maus im Hotel gesehen worden sei, in welchem Stock, in welchem Zimmer, wie weit entfernt von dem unseren, den es läßt sich denken, daß in diesem keine Maus sich je gezeigt hatte. (259)

In her regard and exaggerated concern for the whereabouts of the mouse Canetti's mother exhibits her neurotic behavior. The choice of a mouse as the instrument of fear is quite effective, since the reader can often identify with the anxiety a mouse can cause, and therefore empathize with the fear. By depicting his mother's neurotic behavior Canetti is also allowing the reader to gain a better understanding of her. What is most important in this passage is that it recreates a process : that of creation.

Als früher Anhänger des Odysseus mochte ich wohl komplett erfundene Geschichten, in denen man zu jemandem anderen wurde und sich verbarg, nicht aber kurzbeinige Lügen, die keine dichtende Aktivität erforderten. (260)

This statement elucidates certain notions that Canetti holds on art, as well as on veracity. For Canetti art is not bound by any laws of believability, but is verified by its own existence. The "plot" or the "text" of a story is its own validation, in that it was "conceived " by the writer's imagination. The reader exercises a suspension of disbelief and accepts the plot because it involves an artful

creation. It is not a "Lüge" since it does not re-create the past account of any action, but is purely an imaginary creation. The story of the dancing mice, becomes a perfect example of this "theory."

So packte ich einmal, sie war eben angekommen, die sache nach Art des Odysseus und sagte kurtzentschlossen, ich hätte etwas Wunderbares erlebt und müsse ihr davon berichten: in meinem kleinen Dachzimmer oben hätte eine Versammlung von Mäusen stattgefunden. Im Scheine des Vollmondes hätten sie sich eingefunden, viele, sicher ein Dutzend, und da hätten sie sich nun im Kreis bewegt und getanzt. Von meinem Bett aus hätte ich sie beobachten können, jede Einzelheit war zu sehen, es war so hell, es sei wirklich ein Tanz gewesen, kreisförmig immer in einer Richtung, nicht so rasch, wie sie sich sonst bewegten, eher ein Schleifen als ein Schlüpfen, und eine Mäuse Mutter sei dabeigewesen, die ihre Junges im Maul hielt und mittanzte. Es sei nicht zu sagen, wie zierlich dieses Kleine , daß ihr halb im Maul steckte, ausgesehen habe, aber ich hatte den Eindruck gehabt, daß die kreisende Bewegung der Mutter mit den anderen ihm nicht angenehm gewesen sei, es habe kläglich zu piepsen begonnen, und da die Mutter durch den Tanz gefesselt war und ihn nicht unterbrechen mochte, habe es immer lauter gepiepst, bis die Mutter zögernd, vielleicht sogar etwas unwillig aus der

Reihe trat und ein wenig abseits vom Kreise, aber noch im
Mondlicht, dem Kleinen zu trinken gab. Ein Jammer, daß sie das
nicht selber gesehen habe, es sei wie bei Menschen gewesen, die
Mutter biete dem Säugling die Brust, ich hätte vergessen, daß
es Mäuse seien, so menschenähnlich sei es gewesen....(.260-261)

The entire scene has something of a phantasmagorical atmosphere. The moonlight shining through the window, and the mice dancing in a circle, create a surrealist scene. Canetti gives the story "humanness" and "believability" by giving his mice human qualities. The actions of the mouse mother and its tiny "baby" are created to link the hearer to the story. This is part of the narrative strategy. The young mouse goes from emitting a sound described as "piepsen", the recognizable sound of a mouse, to "Jammern," a definitely human sound. The movement of the dancers from "Schleichen" to "Schlüpfen" also serves to let the reader or listener identify the characters as human.

Canetti's intent in including this episode was to "teach his mother a lesson." In doing so Canetti also points to a changing of roles between mother and son. It is now the son who can act as teacher. More importantly, though, we are privy to the inception of the story. Olney says that the autobiography is the only genre in which the author can explain his art while at the same time he is creating it.⁵⁷ He creates the autobiography by explaining the creation of the story within

⁵⁷James Olney, The Autobiography and the Cultural Moment, in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980) 25.

the autobiographical text. We witness the birth of a fiction. Canetti also includes these episodes in the autobiography as means of exploring and often justifying his mother's behavior.

Many of Canetti's attitudes can be directly traced to his mother's influence. This is especially true when we speak of his misogyny. Canetti's mother disliked women.⁵⁸ Her heroes, whether literary or historical, were always men and she empathized with a world populated by male characters. She held men to be her intellectual equals, and found in women mostly weakness and obtuseness. She was a harsh observer and judge.

"Die Tante ist schön!" sagte ich begeistert auf dem Heimweg. Sie hatte eine dunkle Haut und wunderbar große, schwarze Augen.

"Sie riecht so gut", sagte ich noch, sie hatte mich geküßt und roch noch besser als die Pariser Tante "Ach was," sagte die Mutter, "sie hat einer riesige Nase und Elefantenbeine."(88)

Even her literary heroes were men, and she disparaged women and feared their influence on her son.

In der letzten Zeit kam dazu, daß sie die überwiegend weiblichen Einflüsse in meinem Leben zu fürchten begann. Wie sollte ich durch bloßes Wissen, zu dem es mich immer heftiger zog, ein Mann werden? Sie verachtete ihr Geschlecht. Ihr Held war nicht irgendeine Frau, sondern Coriolan.(310)

⁵⁸Lawson 20.

Canetti became as harsh a judge of women as his mother had been, but nowhere is this more obvious than in *Die Blendung* where the idea of unpleasantness, greed and stupidity are all embodied in the character of Therese Krumbholz.

Grandfather

It is through the figure of Canetti's grandfather that much of his family background is presented. Grandfather Canetti is a complex, charismatic character who had great influence in Canetti's life. It is through him that Canetti gains an insight of the importance of language not only as a means of communication but of integration.

Canetti's grandfather understood the consolidating nature of language. Language allowed him to be part of a society and to communicate with people on equal terms. "Er suchte zu allen Menschen in *ihrer* Sprache zu sprechen," says Canetti. " (103) It is through the grandfather's influence that Canetti learns to appreciate the importance of knowing languages, and becomes an avid student of them. But not all of the grandfather's influences are depicted as constructive. Old Canetti is described as insincere and often superficial, characteristics that Canetti dislikes. " Der Großvater packte mich bei jeder Gelegenheit im Hof," says Canetti" küßte mich ab und weinte, wenn jemand es sehen konnte, heiße Tränen. (43) . The emphasis on "heiße Tränen," -- whereas he often cries "warme Tränen"- - denotes Canetti's intention to depict his grandfather as not "totally sincere," but the phrase "wenn jemand es sehen konnte" suggests to us that he was also acting.

And it is this very ability that will make the grandfather important. It is through his grandfather's imitations of people, his ability to act and tell stories that Canetti becomes fascinated with "theater." Grandfather Canetti is able to "embellish" characters, or to transform them into fictions.

Seine Kenntnisse bezogen sich, abgesehen von seinem Geschäft, das er souverän beherrschte, ausschließlich auf seine eigenen Beobachtungen unter Menschen. Diese konnte er nachmachen und wie ein Schauspieler spielen, und manche Leute, die ich selber kannte, wurden mir durch die Art, wie er sie spielte, so interessant, daß sie mich dann in ihrer wahren Person bitter enttäuschten, während sie mich im seinem Spiel mehr und mehr faszinierten.

(104)

The grandfather's acting, in less structured social gatherings, becomes the grandson's talent for writing and reading plays. The older man's storytelling ability develops in the younger man as the artful form of novel writing or in the writing of this autobiography.

Canetti's disregard for religion, his dislike for business and his contemptuous attitudes towards money can also be traced to the grandfather's influence.

Canetti also recognized admirable character traits in the grandfather. Much is written about the old man's energy, his intelligence and his shrewdness, so that the picture we get of him, is one of equilibrium and traditionalism. If Canetti disregarded many of the grandfather's "teachings" he nonetheless considered him

and his ideas important and influential enough to include them, quite extensively, in the autobiography. And it is through writing the autobiography that Canetti tried to grasp the grandfather's influence and importance.

The Loss of Paradise

The experience of anti-Semitism though not extensively dealt with in the autobiography, becomes one of the traumatic "awakenings" in Canetti's life. The social depression that followed World War One opens Canetti's consciousness onto a new phase of experience. The experience of being taunted--by his school-mates-- and signaled out as a Jew changes Canetti's perception of the world and signals the beginning of a new journey. It is the loss of Paradise. This loss of innocence is reflected in the thoughts and attitudes of young Canetti. The language of the autobiography changes, allowing for a much more introspective and intellectual attitude. From here on the autobiography explores issues that extend beyond the immediate relationship of mother and son, to concentrate on philosophical and moral issues. There is an intellectual "awakening" that Canetti explores through the autobiography and an effort to distinguish the different plateaus of growth and realization. Most importantly the autobiography re-creates Canetti's "awakening" as to the incomprehensible nature of mankind and the fundamental realization of the elusive nature of life.

The interest here is in the distinction that he draws between life and fiction, since we are arguing that the entire autobiographical process is a fictional

one. At this point we encounter a young man, who influenced by a writer,— C. F. Meyer— tries to resolve issues that are essential to him as a man and as a future writer. The chapter re-creates the torment of recognizing existential issues such as mortality, impermanence and vulnerability. Nature and the written word become the only two constants that are trustworthy. The words "Wirklichkeit" and "Widerspruch" dominate the chapter, giving it its sense of confusion. Linguistically, the autobiography depicts this state of mind by having Canetti live through works of fiction. " Ich folgte Meyer in die Bartholomäusnacht," writes Canetti " und in den Dreißigjährigen Krieg. Ich begegnete bei ihm Dante in Person, und das Bild des Dichters, wie er aus seinem Verbanntsein heraus sprach, prägte sich mir ein".(p289)

The last chapter of *Die gerettete Zunge*, entitled "Das verworfene Paradies" treats a real and a metaphoric loss of innocence. It signified the end of life as it had been known to him . The notion of sequential time, which is always present and important in Canetti, is further defined by using a specific time: 1921. This date will mark the end of a perfect "intellectual life" as well as the beginning of an emotional separation from his mother. This chapter describes the "undoing " of his life. Much of the autobiography up to this point was a careful re-creation of his mother's efforts to build his life, and shape it according to her designs. Here we shall witness the ravaging of it.

To re-create the process of disintegration, Canetti changes his narrative style. There are rapid dialogues that mimic the violence of the episode.

"Ich kann nichts dafür, daß ich noch nichts bewiesen habe. Was könnte ich mit 16 bewiesen haben?"

"Nicht viel, das ist wahr. Aber andere werden in dem Alter schon in die Arbeit gesteckt. Zwei Jahre wärst du jetzt schon ein Lehrling, wenn es mit rechten Dingen zuginge. Davor habe ich dich bewahrt. Ich merke nicht, daß du dankbar dafür bist. Du bist nur hochmütig und wirst es von Monat zu Monat mehr..."

"...Aber was kann ich denn tun, bevor ich mit der Schule fertig bin?" "Du wirst nie etwas tun! Du wirst die Schule fertig machen, dann willst du studieren. Weißt du, warum du studieren willst? Bloß um immer wieder lernen zu können..." (313)

In this last chapter -- and through this dialogue--Canetti summarizes the essence of his mother's beliefs and hatreds, as well as depicts the bewilderment of a child whose very life is being contradicted. Finally, though, what is important to our analysis is the retrospective view of life that Canetti gains through his re-creation. By re-creating his life, by creating a new one through the text, he gains a perspective of the future that helps define him. This loss of Paradise, his move from Zurich to Frankfurt is used as a metaphor to signify the loss of happiness which nonetheless also assumes growth and enrichment.

Die einzig vollkommen glücklichen Jahre, das Paradies in Zürich, waren zu Ende. Vielleicht wäre ich glücklich geblieben, hätte sie mich nicht fortgerissen. Es ist aber wahr, daß ich andere Dinge

erfuhr als die ich im Paradies kannte. Es ist wahr, daß ich, wie der früheste Mensch, durch die Vertreibung aus dem Paradies erst entstand. (319).

Chapter two

Die Fackel im Ohr

Introduction

Three things make *Die Fackel im Ohr* essentially different from *Die gerettete Zunge* and *Das Augenspiel*: the emphasis on hearing as opposed to speaking or seeing; the introduction of stories within the context of the autobiographical text that point towards the unusual or "grotesque," and the abundant textual representation of Canetti's "misogynistic tendencies." In the following pages I shall analyze these topics which constitute the most significant differences between *Die gerettete Zunge* and *Die Fackel im Ohr*.

I have selected passages in *Die Fackel im Ohr* that are representative of Canetti's style, which tends towards realistic re-creations devoid of metaphorical or hyperbolic language. Though some of the characters re-created appear as caricatures who often move in dream-like atmospheres, Canetti's concrete language anchors them within a specific context to lend them reality.

Linear time is still a central and organizing principle in *Die Fackel im Ohr*, and chapters are rigorously arranged in time. There is an added element of reference in *Die Fackel* whereby the author points the reader towards a thematic platform or problem. The chapters and the scenes within them bear names that direct us to a specific historical moment as well as to a specific "problem" that is dealt with and developed in the subchapter. Teil 2, for example, is subtitled "Sturm und Zwang" an obvious play of words on the name of the literary movement Sturm und Drang. It refers to and it re-creates a tumultuous and taxing

time in Canetti's life as he learns to live with and manage the affairs of his younger brother while he himself wakes up to the new intellectual influences of Veza and *Die Fackel*. The thematic platform in this chapter refers to Canetti's intellectual growth and development between the years 1924 and 1925. "Simsons Blendung" deals with the importance of "painting" as an art form and its direct influence on Canetti's work. It also reveals the source of the title of Canetti's only novel, *Die Blendung*, which was taken from Rembrandt's painting "Die Blendung Simsons."⁵⁹ The thematic divisions, which coincide with the different chapters in *Die Fackel im Ohr* are used to clarify and place the re-creation into a more definitive time frame. They guide the reader to essential representations that help clarify many of Canetti's actions. In the case of "Die Blendung Simsons" the subtitle lets the reader gain a better understanding of Canetti's novel and many of its ironic analogies become clear.

Die Fackel im Ohr represents a point of departure from *Die gerettete Zunge* in which Canetti's mother is the dominant character. She outshines all the others by dominating young Canetti's life emotionally and physically. In *Die Fackel im Ohr* her character seems to shrink in importance, and it is Veza who emerges as

⁵⁹Canetti had first given his novel the title of *Kant fängt Feuer*, but later changed it to *Die Blendung*. (Translated into English as *Auto da Fe*) The latter title though, captures the essential thematic symbolism of the novel by comparing Samson to Peter Kien, both of whom lose their strength by their trust and reliance on women. What makes the comparison even more interesting, and makes *Die Blendung* appear as a poignantly satirical work, is the pairing of Therese Krumbholz with Delilah. Peter Kien's strength is to be found in his books--Samson's hair--and his undoing is the result of Therese's withholding of them after she marries him. But Therese is a ludicrous character who signifies above all misplaced vanity and stupidity, characteristics that one can not associate with Delilah.

central to Canetti's emotional growth . Almost as important as Veza , but on another plateau of this autobiographical landscape, is the impressive figure of Karl Kraus and his journal *Die Fackel*. Veza becomes focal to Canetti's emotional life, while Kraus acts as his intellectual mentor, especially in the first part of the book.

Die gerettete Zunge was subtitled *Geschichte einer Jugend, Die Fackel im Ohr* became simply a *Lebensgeschichte 1921-1931*. Implicit in these subtitles is the assumption of personal growth, which in Canetti's case is expressed mainly in intellectual terms. In *Die Fackel* this growth takes place through the sense of hearing; by listening to language and apprehending its meaning. In *Die gerettete Zunge* the emphasis had been on the importance of language as a means of learning and communication.

Throughout the book there are allusions to sex and sexuality, but Canetti is intent in emphasizing his early sexual innocence as a way to underscore his intellectual superiority. *Die Fackel im Ohr* represents a passage into adulthood.

In *Die Fackel im Ohr* we find the same kind of retrospection and re-interpretation of experiences that we found in the *Die gerettete Zunge*. but this work is more densely populated by characters that foreshadow the birth of Canetti's fictions. There is much emphasis on the use of the bizarre and the grotesque. The characters often stretch the limits of what we generally accept as "normal" to dwell on obscure behavioral patterns--such as licking the backs of pictures--or abnormal physical characteristics--such as Marek's immense tongue.

This gives us the opportunity to view a process of "filtration" by which a historical character can appear, albeit slightly transformed, in a work of fiction. Shades of Therese Krumbholz, the main female character in *Die Blendung*, appear in characters re-created in *Die Fackel im Ohr*. Frau Weinreb and the "Henker" are a case in point.

Canetti's interest in the unique and grotesque, is not clarified in *Die Fackel im Ohr*, but is explained in *Das Augenspiel*- another interesting point if we consider that in *Das Augenspiel* there are no grotesque characters re-created. In "Beginn eines Gegensatzes,"--a subchapter in *Das Augenspiel*-- Canetti offers an explanation of the genesis of his fictional characters, including those that we can categorize as unusual or grotesque. "Beginn eines Gegensatzes" re-creates a dialogue between Canetti and Broch who was horrified by the characters of *Die Blendung* and wanted to know the "meaning" of the novel.

Er schloß sich meiner Meinung an, als ich diese Frage verneinte. Ich brachte die Sprache auf Gogol, denn da ihm das Groteske der Figuren im Roman aufgefallen war, mußte ich mich auf das Vorbild berufen, das wirklich eines war. "Ich war eher von Gogol beeinflusst, es sollten sehr extreme Figuren sein, so weit wie möglich auf die Spitze getrieben, komisch und schrecklich zugleich, so daß das Schreckliche vom Komischen gar nicht zu

unterscheiden ist." ⁶⁰

The characters that Canetti creates in *Die Blendung* reflect the incomprehensible and bizarre aspects of a world Canetti finds increasingly frightening. "Alles um uns ist angsterend." writes Canetti, " Es gibt keine gemeinsame Sprache mehr. Keiner versteht den anderen. Ich glaube keiner *will* den anderen verstehen."⁶¹ The novel depicts a world in which man has lost his ability to communicate and interact with others, and the characters live isolated by their very uniqueness. One can not forget, though, that in this re-creation Canetti is talking about "Figuren," fictional characters within the purely fictional world of the novel. These characters differ greatly from the " Menschen" that Canetti re-creates in his autobiography, who have survived in Canetti's memory and are not a product of his imagination.

This point is important to remember as we deal with the problem of "fictionality" which pervades Canetti's autobiography.

Canetti acknowledges a certain transposition of "fact into fiction" as a natural problem of re-creation. He writes, "Ich hatte vieles in Berlin gesehen, das mich bestürzte und verwirrte. Es ist verwandelt, and andere Lokalitäten transponiert und nur für mich noch erkennbar, in später Geschriebenes eingegangen." He nonetheless explains and stresses to his readers that the

⁶⁰Elias Canetti, *Das Augenspiel. Lebensgeschichte 1931-1937* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag ,1990) 40-41.

⁶¹*Das Augenspiel* 41.

autobiography "represents recollections or memories of the past,"⁶² which have not lost their "Gestalt," and are therefore recognizable events. Their historical veracity as well as their availability seem essential to Canetti:

Es widerstrebt mir, etwas das nun auf seine Weise besteht, zu reduzieren und auf seinen Anlaß zurückzuführen. Darum habe ich es vorgezogen, nur eines Wenige aus diesen Berliner drei Monaten herauszugreifen, und zwar besonders solches, das seine erkennbare Gestalt behalten hat und nicht ganz in die geheimen Irrgänge verschwand, aus denen ich es herausgraben und neu bekleiden müßte.⁶³

The word "herauszugreifen" points to Canetti's idea about the problem of "memories." Canetti believes that memories are stored at different levels of consciousness. In order to remain faithful to historical truth, the autobiographer must be able to avail himself of these memories without the need of deep probing. They need no "bekleiden," as they are, according to Canetti, authentic representations and re-creations of experiences that do not need embellishment.

The word "herauszugreifen" also alludes to the theory of psychoanalysis

⁶² Olney 49.

⁶³Elias Canetti, *Die Fackel im Ohr. Lebensgeschichte 1921-1931* (Frankfurt am Main: Fisher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1982) 287-88. All quotations from *Die Fackel im Ohr* will be taken from this edition.

and to Freudian theory⁶⁴ in general with which Canetti strongly disagrees. The words "drangsalieren, kujonieren und erpressen," in the next paragraph are direct references to Freud's theory of repression and to the use of psychoanalysis as a way to bring forth repressed feelings and memories. For Canetti this method of recall is invalid as it represents a surgically cleaned version of the truth and not the "Erinnerung" or "Erlebnis" itself.

Ich bin im Gegensatz zu vielen, besonders solchen, die einer redseligen Psychologie erliegen sind, nicht der Überzeugung, daß man die Erinnerung drangsalieren, kujonieren und erpressen oder der Wirkung wohlberechneter Lockmittel aussetzen soll, ich verneige mich vor der Erinnerung, von jedes [sic] Menschen Erinnerung. Ich will sie so intakt belassen, wie sie dem Menschen, der für seine Freiheit besteht, zugehört, und verhehle nicht meinen Abscheu vor denen, die sich herausnehmen, sie chirurgischen Eingriffen so lange auszusetzen, bis sie der Erinnerung aller übrigen gleicht. Mögen sie an Nasen, Lippen, Ohren, Haut und Haaren herumoperieren, soviel sie wollen, mögen sie ihnen, wen es denn muß, andersfarbige Augen einsetzen, auch fremde Herzen die ein Jährchen länger schlagen, mögen sie alles betasten, stutzen, glätten,

⁶⁴Canetti's anti-Freudian stance surfaces throughout this part of the autobiography as he tries to show how above all that Freud was part of an "intellectual fashion." " Es gab kaum ein Gespräch," says Canetti " in dem der Name Freud nicht auftauchte,... (115) The "Freudian slip" and "the Oedipal complex" became the main targets of his assault.

gleichen, aber die Erinnerung sie sollen lassen stân. (288)

Canetti's dismissal of anything Freudian becomes a kind of personal, intellectual liberation, and is closely associated with his intellectual break from his mother. Both themes are treated in the same section of the autobiography, a fact suggestive in itself, when we consider that Canetti will never be free of the complicated burden of this mother-son relationship. It is this break in the relationship with his mother that brings a change in the emotional tone of the autobiography. Throughout the autobiography Canetti manages to give his readers a very detached view of himself. There are very few "confessional elements" in the work. This "detached" view-- which is also present in *Die gerettete Zunge*-- of the self in its interaction with others is due to Canetti's approach to the autobiography, which differs from that of Neruda who through his poetics offers us a more "human" or approachable subject. Though Bollacher says that : "Canetti's approach to autobiography does not aim at an artificial isolation of an unchanging self from its time and the people around it, but rather subscribes to the insight that the self is only constituted through contact with others."⁶⁵ Canetti reveals little of himself in the autobiographical text creating a kind of hermetic narcissism. Through the inclusion of complex characters Canetti often re-creates his own personal intricacies but leaves much of his emotional self outside the text of the autobiography. Jealousy is the only emotion that is frequently dealt with,

⁶⁵Martin Bollacher, " I bow to Memory: Elias Canetti 's autobiographical Writings," in *Essays in Honor of Elias Canetti*, trans. Michael Hulse (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 1987) 265.

and it is only when referring to his mother that we find a break in the emotional wall that Canetti creates around himself. It is here, though, that Canetti's emotional "Sturm" is carefully captured. This characteristic is only present in this section of *Die Fackel im Ohr* and does not reappear until the very last chapter of *Das Augenspiel*.

The Importance of Hearing

Names and Attitudes

The "Pension Charlotte" is the introductory chapter in *Die Fackel im Ohr*. The "Pension" served Canetti as a "school" where he learned to study people in their unique and peculiar situations. The learning that took effect here came about not by the interchange of ideas but by "hearing," and "listening." "Listening" and "hearing" in order to "comprehend" life thus becomes the central and unifying metaphor for this part of the autobiography. Canetti makes a strong differentiation between these two actions, since it is only through "hearing" that the process of learning is effected.

"Hearing" becomes an essential point of contact and communication with the world. Most of the learning and growth that Canetti re-creates in this part of the autobiography comes not through the expression of the word but through its "absorption." There is often a disassociation between the "sound" and "the sound maker" that becomes the basis for Canetti's "akustischen Masken," as he refers to the characters in his plays.

"In der Pension Charlotte " writes Canetti, " lernten wir alle möglichen Menschen kennen, die ich täglich während der Hauptmahlzeit wiedersah und die nur allmählich wechselten. Einige waren während der ganzen zwei Jahre da, die ich schließlich in der Pension verbrachte, andere bloß ein oder nur ein halbes Jahr; sie waren sehr unterschiedlich, alle haben sich mir eingeprägt, doch mußte ich gut aufpassen, um zu verstehen , wovon die Rede war." (8) Canetti emphasizes the uniqueness of the characters--"alle möglichen Menschen"-- who inhabited the Pension to point towards the richness and diversity of his "school." He is also intent on re-creating his own attitude towards this new environment and his intention to learn from it. The word "eingeprägt" points " to Canetti's intention to assure his readers of the "accuracy" of the descriptions, a statement that is important to keep in mind throughout the autobiography. The Pension Charlotte is primarily a school of learning for Canetti.

Canetti undergoes this same kind of learning experience at Karl Kraus's readings. It is here that he becomes aware and critical of many personalities of the time, and though he eventually turns against Kraus's "teachings" and ideologies, it is this very process of "hearing" and "listening" that leads him to question many of Kraus's postulations.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Richard Lawson says that " the first volume [of Canetti's autobiography] revolves about the concept of tongue and language, and the second volume, *The Torch in My Ear*, revolves- in this case almost literally- about the idea of hearing. The central chapter, chapter 3 of five, is entitled "The School of Hearing. " The school has two principal classes. In the first, which describes his courtship of Veza, he learns in the course of their intellectual exchanges [...]to both listen and to comprehend the word of others. This comprises the beginning of tolerance. The second class in "The School of Hearing" leads to a revaluation of Karl Kraus's famous public

One of the characteristics unique to this part of the autobiography is the peculiar nature of the names of many of Canetti's characters. These names serve as satirical forms of representation that depict a certain personality type or trait and become referential figures by which others can be judged.

At the Pension Charlotte we meet "Frau Kupfer, braun und von Sorge ausgemerkelt." The word "Kupfer" connotes brilliance, but her brilliance is tarnished by worry. The word "ausgemerkelt" brings forth the image of an overly thin and puny woman. In this case the surname is used as an antonym and describes all that Frau Kupfer is not. We have Herr Rebhun, who, when in a combative mood starts looking and behaving like a wild chicken. We find Herr Schimmel, "ein Rayon - Chef, strotzend von Gesundheit," (13) whose personal image and name are at odds, since we do not associate "mold or mildew" with someone "bursting with health."

The most interesting character in the Pension is Fräulein Rahm, who serves to introduce the theme of sexuality and morality in the autobiography.

Fräulein Rahm-- whose name suggests purity, as we associate the idea of whiteness with cream-- serves to illustrate how Canetti uses his characters to explore and expand on peripheral themes, so that the reader becomes acquainted with the specific character and associates it with the character's "thematic" importance. Fräulein Rahm becomes identified with the idea of sexual love.

readings, an early critical look (or rather a harkening) that presages Canetti's eventual break with the celebrated satirist." (12)

Fräulein Rahm, ein schlankes, junges Mannequin, sehr blond, die modische Schönheit der Pension, kam nur manchmal zum Essen. Sie nahm wegen ihrer Figur nur wenig zu sich, um so mehr war von ihr die Rede. Kein Mann, der ihr nicht nachsah, kein Mann, den es nicht nach ihr gelüstete, und da man wußte, daß es neben ihrem festen Freund, dem Inhaber eines Herrenmodegeschäfts, der nicht in der Pension wohnte, auch andere Männer gab, die sie besuchten, dachten viele an sie und betrachteten sie mit dem Wohlgefallen für etwas, das einem zusteht und einem eines Tages auch zufallen könnte. Die Frauen lästerten über sie. Die Männer, wenn sie es vor ihren Frauen riskierten oder wenn sie allein waren, legten ein gutes Wort für sie ein, besonders für ihre elegante Figur, sie war so hoch und schlank, daß man mit den Augen an ihr auf und ab klettern konnte, ohne irgendwo Halt zu finden. (8)

In this description Canetti captures the essential climate of the "Pension Charlotte" and renders a searing judgment on society in general. Fräulein Rahm is used by Canetti to point out the spurious nature of both the male and female characters. He captures and re-creates a set of attitudes and assumptions. Men assume a lustful but otherwise benign attitude, while women are depicted as envious and insincere. Furthermore, Fräulein Rahm's is given a "dubious moral character" by incorporating the simple statement that "da man wußte, daß es neben ihrem festen Freund,[...]auch andere Männer gab, die sie besuchten..."(8)

within the context that describes her. This image of " amorality" and aberrant behavior in Fräulein Rahm is furthered in the following passage, a "sexual awakening" for young Canetti.

Es begann mit Bitten des Herrn Ödenburg, die mit schroffem Nein des Fräulein Rahm erwidert wurden. Die Bitten steigerten sich zu Flehen, ein Winseln und Betteln ging los, das nicht aufhören wollte, von immer kälterem Nein! unterbrochen, schließlich klang es, als sei Fräulein Rahm ernsthaft böse." Hinaus!Hinaus! ...

Zufällig , wie ich dachte, hatte sich das Opernglas auf das hellerleuchtete Fenster ihres Zimmers gerichtet. Da stand sie nackt, den Kopf hoch erhoben, schlank und schimmernd von rötlichen Licht...Sie ging ein paar Schritte, immer kerzengrade, so wie sie in Kleidern ging...Während Fräulein Rahm, in ihrem Zimmer hin und her gegangen war, hatte Herr Ödenburg immer gewinselt, es hatte ihr gar keinen Eindruck gemacht, sie benahm sich, als sähe sie ihn nicht, als wäre sie allein, auch ich sah ihn nicht, es war, als wäre er nicht dagewesen. (37-41)

The scene perfectly captures the sexual atmosphere: the indifference of the woman and the submissive attitude of the man. Canetti re-creates a battle of wills, power and domination between the sexes .Most importantly, though, it captures young Canetti's fascination and sexual awareness at the sight of a nude, beautiful body.

As we consider the oddity of names we might remark on another one: Herr Ring. If "Rahm" conjured up the image of whiteness and purity, which does not fit the character and is obviously used to build a satire of sorts, in Herr Ring name and image correspond. He is described as "corpulent," therefore "round" and "smooth" in his interactions with others. Herr Ring is a flatterer who, in his love of hyperbole, always sounds insincere.

We find allusions to homosexual behavior in the episode, though as often happens in Canetti's writings the subject of sexuality is "veiled." The reader, though, is given enough clues to enable him to draw his own conclusions. This episode helps Canetti re-create the notion of sexual innocence that he so elaborately develops through much of the early part of the text. This notion often seems to be drummed into the reader's mind by allusions to sexual acts. Canetti is never shy in announcing his inexperience and flaunting it as a kind of symbol of intellectual superiority.

Canetti often deals with complex issues by interjecting comical circumstances into otherwise serious or troubling matters. He is unable to deal with the subject of sexuality or homosexuality directly, and therefore uses characters such as Fräulein Rahm or Johnnie Ring to represent or voice the problematics. In Herr Rings case he re-creates the comic aspects of the situation. "Es begann mit Lobreden auf ihre wohlherzogenen drei Buben." writes Canetti, "Man möchte es nicht glauben, Gnädigste, so hübsch wie Grafensöhne!" " Meine Söhne sind nicht hübsch, Herr Ring", kam es empört zurück. " Darauf kommt es

bei Männern nicht an." "Sagen Sie das nicht Gnädigste, es hilft im Leben!" (98)

With this short and simple dialogue Canetti is able to intimate the subject of homosexuality as well as give as a clear depiction of Johnnie's personality. The point is further clarified in the following episode.

...Ein junger Mann erschien und verschwand mit Johnnie und Nero im Kabinett und blieb da mehrere Stunden, bis die Zeit für Bar und Klavierspielen gekommen war. Man hörte keinen Laut aus dem Kabinett, Nero, der es gewohnt war, da zu schlafen, bellte nie. Es war nie auszumachen, ob Johnnie und der Junge Mann miteinander sprachen.

...Das Kabinett, in das sie nie einen Blick geworfen hätte-sie mied es wie die Pest-, war eng, für viel mehr als ein Bett war kaum Platz darin, und daß zwei Menschen, von denen der eine der üppige Johnnie war, und ein großer Hund es stundenlang in dieser Enge aushielten, ohne daß ein Laut zu vernehmen gewesen wäre, beschäftigte sie sehr.

...Einmal sagte sie:" Ich glaube, der junge Mann legt sich unters Bett schlafen. Er sieht immer so bleich und müde aus. Vielleicht hat er kein eigenes Zimmer und der Johnnie läßt ihn aus Mitleid ein paar Stunden unterm Bett schlafen." "Ja, warum nicht auf dem Bett?" sagte ich in aller Unschuld, "meinst du, der Johnnie ist zu dick und für beide zusammen ist kein Platz?" "*Unterm Bett hab ich*

gesagt", sie sah mich scharf an: "Was hast du für sonderbare Gedanken?" (99-100)

This scene is rich in implied meanings and suggestions. There is never an overt declaration as to the sexual preferences of Johnnie, but we can divine his proclivities long before the appearance of the "junger Mann." Furthermore, the protestations of Canetti's mother and Canetti's own affirmation as to the innocence of his thoughts point the reader towards a likely conclusion.

The Story within the Story

The use of the "grotesque"

In *Die Fackel im Ohr* Canetti incorporates autonomous stories within the larger story that constitutes the autobiographical text. This characteristic is absent from *Die gerettete Zunge* as well as from *Das Augenspiel*. These --what I have called "encapsulated- stories-- have a variety of functions. They are psychological portraits of unique characters whose behavior requires careful interpretation. Canetti supplies the text, but the interpretative problem is left open to the reader. The characters who are re-created in these episodes move in worlds that are not readily identifiable, and display aberrant behavioral patterns that can be qualified as grotesque,⁶⁷ and though we are always assured as to the "reality" of these characters--by Canetti's insistence on the accuracy of his memories-- it is often in

⁶⁷In speaking about "grotesque" I am referring to characters that assume the same characteristics as Canetti's "characters" in *Die Blendung*.

these episodes that "memory seems mixed up with acts of invention"⁶⁸ They are what Watson calls "inevitably the memory of memories,"⁶⁹ a point that may be argued for the autobiographical enterprise in general. In "Frau Weinreb und der Henker," the accuracy of the character's behavior is sometimes suspect because Canetti admits to witnessing this behavior while awakening from sleep. The characters' themselves though, are interesting and strange enough to often resemble characters that had appeared in Canetti's novel *Die Blendung*. An argument could be made that, since *Die Blendung* was written before *Die Fackel im Ohr*, we find elements in the autobiography that are *transposed* from fiction, a process that runs in opposition to the accepted approach to these genres.

Ultimately though, the historical accuracy of these episodes is not important as to the general context of the autobiography, since we are working on the assumption that the re-creation in itself is a fictionalized process. Its importance lies in the fact that by their inclusion we are afforded the re-creation of a problematic. If Canetti will not "explain" the behavior of his characters, he presents them to his readers and furnishes them with interpretative possibilities.

We also find stories that function as what Witte calls "das negative Spiegelbild des autors."⁷⁰ That is, the characters that Canetti re-creates are used to

⁶⁸Julia Watson, "Towards an Anti-Metaphysics of Autobiography," in *Folkenflik* 76.

⁶⁹ Watson 76.

⁷⁰Bern Witte, "Der Erzähler als Tod-Feind" in *Text + Kritik* (München: Weber OFFst GmbH: 1982) 67.

depict what the author objects to most strongly. Canetti's strong contempt for avarice is clearly voiced in "Patriarchen," and Old Altaras is the perfect figure by which Canetti can voice his disapproval of money, greed and gluttony.⁷¹

In Marek, Canetti finds his distorted mirror image. Witte says that Marek is "ein Zwillingsbruder des Dichters, mit all seinen Vorzügen und Idiosynkrasien behaftet. [Wie dieser hat er das feinste Gehör.]⁷² and it through his conversations with Marek that many of Canetti's fictional characters are created. Marek becomes Canetti's muse. The story is also re-created and incorporated in the autobiography because Marek's very existence appeals to Canetti's predilection for the bizarre or "grotesque," and he is able to interject many of his own attitudes into the context of Marek's life.

All these stories within the autobiography have in common their conclusiveness. They are closed episodes that could be extrapolated from the autobiographical text and would function as complete "stories." And though this would not disrupt the intricate scheme of the autobiographical plot, their integration adds an extra dimension to the text and lets Canetti expound and expand on themes that were important in his growth and development as a man and as an artist.

⁷¹The concept of "gluttony" is very important to Canetti. Though he does not deal with this problem in depth in the autobiography, he does so in *Masse und Macht* where he devotes an entire chapter to the importance of eating and food. For Canetti, eating has a direct correlation with death. Stated in simple terms, Canetti says that we eat to stay alive, but to stay alive we kill what we eat, therefore sowing constant and inevitable death.

⁷² Witte, 68.

The first episode I shall consider is "Patriarchen." This episode has the dimensions of a parable, as Old Altaras comes to signify the sins of gluttony and avarice. In *Die gerettete Zunge* Canetti often talks about his disregard of money. Canetti's position is mainly that of a revolt against his family and fundamentally his mother. In "Patriarchen" and in the figure of Old Altaras, Canetti finds the perfect character to voice his disapproval.

The "patriarch," an allusion to King Lear, is Veza's stepfather, old Mento Altaras. He is described as irascible, greedy, avaricious and lacking in charity, a "sin" that in Canetti's eye is as terrible as avarice or gluttony. He is also distrustful of everyone, and is described as a glutton. "Er hielt darauf, daß man frugal und zurückgezogen lebte und seinen Reichtum nicht zur Schau stellte. Für seinen Geiz wie für seine Härte war er berühmt; er verweigerte sich wohltätigen Spenden, was als unerhörte Schande galt." (126) Old Altaras is depicted as a glutton whose hunger for "Braten und Wein" is only equaled by his hunger for money. Canetti does not describe any redeeming qualities in this old man, and his judgment and disapproval of him are total and unequivocal. He includes the episode in the autobiography not only to give us some background information about Veza--since the story relates to her stepfather--but to interject his own judgment about human behavior.

Old Altaras represents humanity in its lowest form. He resembles a figure out of Dante's hell.

Ich war betroffen über seine Ähnlichkeit mit Dante. Es war, als

ercheine dieser aus dem Grab. Wir hatten eben über die "Göttliche Komödie" gesprochen, da würde plötzlich die Tür aufgerissen und er stand da, wie in weiße Laken gehüllt, einen Stock nicht zur Abwehr, sondern zu Klage hoch erhoben: Mi arrobaron las paras- sie haben mir das Geld gestohlen!" - nein, nicht nach Dante, eine Figur aus seiner Hölle. (131)

He serves exactly " ...zum negativen Spiegelbild der Ideale des autors."⁷³

"Frau Weinreb und der Henker" is a much more complex episode. We are dealt issues that defy prompt resolution, and there often appears to be a thin dividing line between the world of reality and dream. The characters too, in their very individuality and distinctness are difficult to understand. Canetti's own problematic relationship with Frau Weinreb and the "Henker" are mirrored in the text. His lack of understanding and his perplexity when confronting these eccentric or "grotesque" characters translates into a "story" that can not and does not attempt a resolution.

The actions of the characters are overtly sexual. Frau Weinreb --whose name elicits the image of a vine, and therefore suggests a clinging personality-- functions as a vestige of her defunct husband and her very essence is mingled with his memory.

Frau Weinreb, bei der ich in der Haidgasse ein schönes, geräumiges Zimmer mitete, war die Witwe eines Journalisten, der als sehr alter

⁷³Witte 67.

Herr gestorben war...In der Wohnung hingen überall seine Bilder, ein großväterlicher Herr mit wohlwollenden Bart. Die Frau mit ihrem dunklen Hundegesicht, die immer ergeben von ihrem Mann sprach, so als wäre er ihr noch als Verstorbener geistig und sittlich turmhoch überlegen, übertrug einen kleinen Teil dieser Verherung auf Studenten. Aus jedem von ihnen konnte etwas wie ein Herr Doctor Weinreb werden, sie nannte ihren Mann nie anders, mit Herr und Doktor. (164)

The preceding description is effective in rendering Frau Weinreb as a character with obvious psychological problems. She displays an unusual submissiveness to her husband, a characteristic that is made more emphatic by describing her as having a "Hundegesicht." In effect Canetti is preparing us for a "metamorphosis." Frau Weinreb not only looks like a "dog," but she behaves like one. She has memorialized her husband by placing his portrait in every room of the house. And it is with these portraits that she carries on a "relationship."

Dann beschnüffelte sie ebenso langsam die Rückseite des Bildes. Es war so still im Zimmer, daß man das Schnüffeln hörte. Ihr Gesicht, das ich jetzt nicht sah, sie kehrte mir den Rücken zu, war mir immer wie das eines Hundes vorgekommen. Mit einer raschen Bewegung tat sie das Bild an seiner Stelle zurück und glitt an die benachbarte Wand, zum nächstem. ... Sie streckte sich wieder in die Höhe, und während die Fingerspitzen noch die obere Leiste des Rahmens

berührten, schnüffelte sie die Stelle des Bildes an der Wand weiter ab. Als sie damit zu Ende war, kauerte sie sich auf dem Boden nieder und machte sich an die Rückseite des Bildes. Ich dachte, sie schnüffle wieder, es war dasselbe Geräusch, an das ich mich in der kurzen Zeit schon gewöhnt hatte. Aber nun sah ich staunend, daß sie die Rückseite des Bildes ableckte. Sie tat das geflissentlich, ihre Zunge hing weit heraus, wie die eines Hundes, sie war ein Hund geworden und schien es zufrieden. (171-172)

There are problems of interpretation, intention and "veracity" in this episode. We can categorize Frau Weinreb's behavior as abnormal, or what I have called "grotesque." In her nightly ritual she metamorphoses into a dog and behaves much as the animal would. The incessant and strong insistence in the narrative of the act of "sniffing" and "licking sedulously" the back of the pictures and walls lends itself to a multitude of psychological interpretations. One assumption is that these actions are sexual in nature, though we can also interpret them as an act of intellectual submission. But this "high Freudian received wisdom"⁷⁴ as Jerome Bruner calls it, might be a somewhat simplistic answer to the problem that the author poses for us. Canetti incorporates the episode as a dramatic way of illustrating the often incomprehensible nature of human behavior. The passage is full of implied meanings and allusions--such as intellectual, sexual and social submission--,but it is the lack of self defining conditions that Canetti intends to

⁷⁴Jerome Bruner, "The Autobiographical Process" in *Folkenflik* 39.

depict. The reader is also challenged as to the "veracity" of the episode. Though Canetti is intent on confirming the experience as "true" we should note that the initial part of the passage, in which Canetti places the setting in time, bears astonishing similarities to the "story of the mice," which is to be found in *Die gerettete Zunge*. In both Canetti insists that "[Er] sah sie ganz deutlich,..." "

Eines Nachts erwachte ich und sah jemand in meinem Zimmer. Frau Weinreb im Schlafrock stand vor dem Bild ihres Mannes, hob es vorsichtig von der Wand und blickte, als ob sie etwas suche, dahinter. Ich sah sie ganz deutlich, das Zimmer war von Straßenbeleuchtung draußen hell, die Vorhänge waren nicht zugezogen. (171)

The accuracy of the episode--not the character-- is also questionable because of Canetti's admission of having just "awakened" from sleep. He thus places himself in the difficult position of being unable of verifying the experience as dream or reality. Ultimately though the historical accuracy of the event-- again, not to be confused with the character-- becomes unimportant as we realize that Canetti includes the episode as a means of re-evaluating the very characters that he re-creates. He is intent in depicting an atmosphere as well as a problematic situation. If he does not explain the behavior of his characters, he presents them to his readers and furnishes them with interpretative possibilities.

In "Der Henker" and Ružena Canetti again re-creates complex psychological profiles. Both can be classified as "grotesque," and both could have

been *transposed* from *Die Blendung*, as they share many attitudes with Theresa Krumbholz.⁷⁵

Die Haushälterin, mit der sie zusammen wohnte, hatte mir die Wohnungstür aufgemacht...Sie war eine starke , massive Person in mittleren Jahren: sie sah so aus, wie ich mir damals einen Henker vorstellte. Sie hatte stark vorspringende Backenknochen und ein grimmes Gesicht, das noch viel gefährlicher wirkte , weil es lächelte. Es hätte mich nicht gewundert, wenn sie mich zum Empfang geohrfeigt hätte. Statt dessen machte sie ein Katzengesicht, aber eines, das ihrer Größe gemäß und darum unheimlich war. (165)

With the physical description of "der Henker," Canetti incorporates and re-creates a character that in itself seems "gefährlich," and that serves to foreshadow a world that is not less frightening. By re-creating characters such as "der Henker" and Ružena, Canetti brings to the autobiography the same "type" of character that he creates in his fictions, narrowing the limits between reality and fiction. Frau Weinreb, "der Henker" and Ružena like the characters in *Die Blendung* are psychological profiles of neurotic and often psychotic behaviors. They are reflections of a world in which all that is "normal" is no longer valid.

⁷⁵Both "der Henker" and Ružena are described as wearing long skirts; the latter as having "eine ungeheure Hinterseite". This feature is shared by Theresa, who in the novel is constantly preoccupied with the state of her skirt and the size of her hips. Skirts and hips become symbols of misplaced pride, chastity, and virginity, characteristics that both Theresa and Ružena lack.

The last chapter that I would like to consider is called "Der Ernährer." It deals with Thomas Marek, a character who had a great impact on Canetti's life. In Marek Canetti finds an intellectual "Zwillingsbruder," whom he can relate to. "An Thomas Marek" writes Canetti, "zog mich vieles an, am meisten die Anstrengung, die er Tag für Tag daran wandte, seiner Ohnmacht Herr zu werden. Von allen Menschen, die ich je gekannt hatte, war er am schlechtesten dran, aber er sprach und ich verstand ihn, und was er sprach hatte Sinn... (337)

Taken in its entirety, the "story of Marek" signifies a change in the tone of *Die Fackel* as there is a deeper identification with this character as had been with the previous ones. Canetti imposes on the character of Marek a series of attitudes and attributes that often mirror Canetti's own views and feelings. He therefore allows Marek to have a voice that emulates his own.

In this last part of *Die Fackel im Ohr* Canetti develops a wealth of characters and themes. All of them are dysfunctional and the universal order of things is reversed. Thomas is called "der Ernährer" a title that one does not usually associate with a quadriplegic. Marek, though, provides for his family because of his unusual genius. He is granted money by a wealthy woman who is impressed by his intelligence and wants him to write an important work in philosophy. Canetti is fascinated by Thomas' will to learn, but is also attracted by his physical appearance.

Ob allein oder nicht, er lag immer, er konnte nicht gehen, er konnte
Arme und Beine nicht bewegen, der Kopf lag schräg und erhöht,

auf einem Kissen daneben lag ein offenes Buch und einmal, beim vorübergehen, hatte ich gesehen, wie ihm die Zunge aus dem Mund herausfuhr und er mit ihr ein Blatt des Buches umdrehte. Das hatte ich nicht *geglaubt*, obwohl ich es deutlich sah, er hatte eine lange, spitze und auffällig rote Zunge. So war ich wie zufällig nochmals vorbeigegangen, so langsam, daß er Zeit gehabt hätte, eine ganze Seite zu memorieren, und richtig, einmal ganz in seiner Nähe, sah ich, wie die Zunge hervorschoß und das Blatt Umdrehte. (305)

What is remarkable in this description is the way Canetti "manipulates" the reader. He suggests the possibility of a recollective error, or a mistaken perception by using and italicizing the word "geglaubt," but then immediately corroborates the veracity of his recreation with his own disbelief. The assurance of "accuracy" is accomplished by the affirmation that events, though true, were so extraordinary that they were hard to believe. Remarkable too is Canetti's ability to pick up details that in their strange nature hold us in a state of expectation. We are driven by a need to know, and to participate as onlookers of this intense and strange plot. The "tongue" in this episode becomes the element of wonder. By describing it as "long" and "intensely red" he adds a sexual connotation to the entire description.

All the characters that Canetti re-creates in this episode contribute to depicting the world as chaotic. Their very dysfunctional nature corroborates this view. Marek's father is described as a "fake." His claim to fame is that he has copied a painting by Giorgione which he passes as his original creation. His

mother functions solely as her son's arms and legs. Marek's benefactress is depicted as an absurd woman, who in her inanity presumes that by helping Marek she will save humanity. It is mainly, though, through Marek and his attitude that Canetti manages to portray a slanted view of the world. There are some humorous and self-deprecating details in the story. Marek's sexual appetite, for example is one of the few "humorous" re-creations in the autobiography.

[Marek] habe früher keine Mädchen gehabt, sagte er, er verdankte auch diese Errungenschaft dem Professor Gomperz..

[Professor Gomperz] ging in ein Café in einer Seitengasse von der Kärntnerstraße, wo Mädchen verkehrten, und setzte sich allein an einen runden Tisch. Er war noch nie in so einem Lokal gewesen. Er hatte schwarze Brillen angelegt, damit man ihn nicht erkenne, schließlich war er Universtätsprofessor und ein älterer Herr. Da saß er in seiner Loden-Palierine, die er nie und an einem solchen Ort erst recht nicht ablegte, groß und bolzengrad. Er blieb nicht lange allein, drei Mädchen setzten sich an seinen Tisch, die sich zwar wenig von ihm erhofften, er sah eher so aus, als wäre er zufällig in dieses Lokal geraten. (331) ⁷⁶

By including such details as "die schwarze Brillen" and "Loden-Palierine" which the Professor had donned and would not take off, and by adding the phrase

⁷⁶ We should note that many of the male characters that Canetti describes, especially those belonging to the "intellectual elite," are described as robust "rotund" men who are overly impressed with their own accomplishments.

"schließlich war er Universitätsprofessor," which as readers we had already learned, Canetti adds a satirical note to the entire scene. Canetti selects language that is not only descriptive but also suggestive.

Taken in its totality, the "Marek episode" is a rich and complex text in which tragedy and comedy are perfectly blended. The world that Canetti re-creates is a tragic one, but the characters are dysfunctional enough and unique enough as to render them comical. They often resemble caricatures. Just as Neruda, in his use of highly stylized metaphors, manages to transform a mundane world into a poetic landscape, Canetti in his ability to mix elements of tragedy and comedy creates a new and transformed world populated by tortured as well as laughable figures.

Misogyny in the Text of *Die Fackel im Ohr*

Lawson explains Canetti's misogynistic streak as a direct outgrowth of his view of sex and sexuality, as well as the product of his upbringing by a tyrannically domineering mother. Canetti imagined "women are more closely attuned to the realities of emotion and sex [a much bandied theme at the term of the century] and that if sex is bad, then women are more to blame."⁷⁷ We can also speculate that Canetti emulates his mother's feelings for women, and that the son shows the same disregard for them as the mother does.

Leaving our speculation aside, what is obvious through the re-creation of

⁷⁷ Lawson 7-8.

female characters in *Die Fackel im Ohr* is Canetti's predilection for depicting women who in some way or another are social pariahs. Frau Weinreb, der Henker, Fräulein Rahm would suffice as examples. There are, though, many more characters and situations in which women are unfavorably depicted which reinforces the notion of misogyny in Canetti's writings.

The examples of misogyny are sometimes associated with an entire episode of the autobiography or they are simply incorporated in the context of another episode. This is the case of Laurica, whom Canetti had introduced to the reader in *Die gerettete Zunge*. Laurica is equipped with all the banal qualities that make for an unpalatable female. She is used to illustrate a certain "type" of female, and as such she elicits a very negative response in Canetti. "Ich war erbittert über ihren Eigensinn und ihre Enge." says Canetti, "Sie ließ nichts gelten als ihre einzige Entschlossenheit: endlich einen Mann zu finden und zu heiraten. Sie war 23 und fürchtete, daß man sie schon für eine alte Jungfer halte. (94)

The words "Eigensinn" and "Enge," give an immediate image of her character. Canetti concisely describes her as stubborn, single-minded and obtuse. In her narrow mindedness she stops being an individual and longs to become part of society through marriage as being "eine alte Jungfer" implies failure. Most importantly, though, is Canetti's reaction to Laurica. The word "erbittert" captures his impatience and insensitivity towards her distress and his negativity towards women. He reaffirms this negativity by the lengthy narration of Laurica's behavior and his response to it:

[Laurica] bestürmte mich mit Bitten um die Wahrheit: Ich solle ihr sagen, ob sie einem Manne noch gefallen könne. Mit 19 müsse ich diese Gefühle doch kennen. Ob ich Lust hätte, sie zu küssen? Ob die Frisur heute einem mehr dazu reize, sie zu küssen, als die gestern? Ob ich sie mager fände?...

Ich glaubte nichts, auf keine ihrer Fragen hatte ich eine Antwort und so rasch sie auf mich niederprasselten, so bockig blieb ich. Ich hatte solche Gefühle noch nicht, sagte ich, obwohl ich 19 sei. Ich wisse gar nicht, ob mir eine Frau gefalle. Woran solle man das merken? Dumm seien alle und worüber könne man schon mit ihnen sprechen. Die seien alle wie sie und erinnerten sich an nichts. Wie sollte einem ein Mensch gefallen, der sich an nichts erinnere?

(95)

We should remember though while dealing with this episode--and for that matter the entire text-- that the autobiography re-creates a "memory of memories."⁷⁸ Canetti therefore is trying to re-create textually the feelings that Laurica elicited in him when he was 19. Canetti's "present" feelings about women in general and Laurica in particular are not given, which somewhat undermines this notion of misogyny. Often the misogynistic views are espoused by other characters, thus making the reader pause to distinguish between author and narrator. There is a veiled effort to "disguise" opinions by shifting them to the re-

⁷⁸Watson, 76.

created characters . The notion of misogyny gains strength in the autobiography by the simple inclusion of misogynistic remarks, as is the case in " Der Blick auf Steinhof. " Herr Fontana says: " Das habe ihm schon sein Freund, ihr erster Mann gesagt: um Gottes willen, bring ihr den Ehering zurück, die hat sonst keine ruhige Stunde! Für die ist das ein Wertgegenstand. (225)

By having Herr Fontana point out Frau Fontana's materialism and lack of sensitivity towards her husband's suffering Canetti-- indirectly-- shows his negativity about women. In another section Herr Fontana's calls "die Gräfin" "Mords-Stuten," (224) which gives us a pointed notion of Herr Fontana's disregard for women. Another demeaning remark about women is voiced by a law student who sells shirts in an open market: "Sie sehen, wie leicht das ist", sagte er, "ich könnte alles verkaufen. Aber Hemden ist am besten. Diese blöden Weiber glauben, man schenkt ihnen was." (197) The words "blöden Weiber" and the student's further remarks about women incorporated in the autobiography, further strengthen the notion of Canetti's misogyny.

There is one instance in which Canetti is accused of being a misogynist. This accusation is made, somewhat ironically, by Veza who calls him "ein Frauenfeind."(205)

The only female characters that are exempt from Canetti's misogyny are his mother and Veza. Though his mother is not re-created as a " kind" person, she is certainly admired by her son for her intelligence and education. Veza, on the other hand, receives benign treatment from Canetti throughout the book. She becomes

the essential linking structure in Canetti's life, much as his mother was in *Die gerettete Zunge*. Since the relationship is more intimate and not confrontational, as it was with his mother, there is much less text devoted to Veza. We do see her, though, as his intellectual mentor and as such she is central to this part of the autobiography.

Die Fackel im Ohr represents ten years of the author's life, a time of conflict, unease but also of growth and realization. This part of the autobiography re-creates the difficult roads that Canetti travelled to become independent as man and as artist.

Chapter Three

Das Augenspiel: A Road of Indirection

Das Augenspiel comprises the third and last part of Canetti's autobiographical works. It covers the years 1931 to 1937. This latter number was not chosen arbitrarily since it marks his mother's death, thus giving one part of his life and this troubled relationship a closure.

I have given this chapter the subtitle "A Road of Indirection" to note a subtle change in Canetti's narrative strategy. This refers specifically to his approach to his reader. In Das Augenspiel Canetti often approaches the reader directly, involving him in the re-interpretation of the author's experiences. This directness and interplay between the author and reader is absent in the preceding works in which the author displays a hermetic narcissism that disregards the reader. This aspect of the narrative is one of the most distinctive differences between the works.

Canetti's approach to time is also different in Das Augenspiel. Die gerettete Zunge and Die Fackel im Ohr find their cohesiveness in their linearity and subordination to time, and by the author's involvement with the characters he re-creates. Das Augenspiel breaks with this tradition. Though we know that there is a certain historical progression taking place, there are frequent breaks in time as Canetti changes verb forms, switching from the past tense to the present. These "narrative lapses," which are also found in Neruda's work, serve to integrate Canetti's present views to his past re-creations. González-Cruz writes that by using this technique Neruda is able to "integrate" his identity with his vision.⁷⁹ In

⁷⁹ González-Cruz, 34.

Canetti these narrative lapses often produce not an integration but a fragmentation of the self. "Er erschien mir damals, vor 50 Jahren," says Canetti, "unerreichbar und unerreichbar ist er mir geblieben."(149) By working on two different time frames the self is, as it were, looking at itself and seeing not a mirror- like image but one "revised" by the distance of time. This technique can be found in different parts of the autobiography, with varying effects. It can signify the opening of the self to itself, or it is used to bring the reader to a different plane of reality: the one the writer is experiencing at the moment of creation. When Canetti writes: " Ich habe mir heute mit Ergriffenheit Bilder von Alban Berg angesehen. Ich traue mir noch immer nicht zu, zu sagen, wie ich ihn erlebt habe." (218) he is breaking the re-trospective aspect of the autobiography and bringing the reader into the author's present and perceivable or "real" world. The original experience is withheld from the reader. The experience is not re-created but created by the moment.

In *Das Augenspiel* Canetti expresses his concerns about death, as he had done in the prior works. *Das Augenspiel*, though, is more concerned than the other two volumes with the epoch and the milieu than with the author himself. It is only in the last chapter of the work that Canetti becomes very subjective and emotionally very direct and open. The autobiography -or *Das Augenspiel*-then becomes a "period piece," a historical document that concerns itself with the re-creation of not only a specific time, but more precisely of specific people. We have, for example , detailed descriptions of writers such as Musil- who had a deep

influence on Canetti- Joyce and Broch, the composer Alban Berg and the sculptor Wotruba. This renders the autobiography very "episodic." It is through these episodes and through Canetti's views and interpretations of different artistic characters that we perceive the author himself. We are able to follow his progress as a writer, through a twofold progression: that of Canetti's writings themselves, including the autobiography, and through Canetti's understanding , perception and interpretation of other important artists of the time. The autobiography thus becomes a historical document as well as a personal and experiential one.

In the introduction to this part of the autobiography we read that " Das Augenspiel besteht in vielen Passagen aus Beobachtungen und Berichten aus Ateliers, Cafés und intellektuellen Zirkeln."⁸⁰ This makes *Das Augenspiel* a work that addresses a specific, and often "educated" audience, since to gain a full understanding of the work the reader often needs a historical or artistic awareness of the time that Canetti is re-creating. This is a fundamental difference between *Das Augenspiel* and the previous works in which the reader is never directly addressed. Though the reader is always an active interpreter of text, it is Canetti's attitude that must be considered. His prior works are hermetic in their self-involvement, and the reader is never mentioned in the narrative. In *Das Augenspiel*, on the other hand, the reader is asked to participate in the act of re-creation by using his own imagination and prior experience to fully capture and

⁸⁰ This observation is found in the anonymous introduction to the work in "*Über dieses Buch*."

comprehend Canetti's re-creation.⁸¹ This is a fundamental change in the autobiographer's attitude.

Das Augenspiel owes its name to Canetti's acquaintance with Anna Mahler, and it is the only book in the trilogy where we can find the title incorporated into the text.

Sie [Anna] habe ihre eigenen gläsernen Gesetze, man könne sie betrachten und bewundern, ihre Augen über alles herrlich finden, dürfe sich aber nie von ihr erblickt fühlen. Worauf sie ihre Augen einmal gerichtet habe, damit müsse sie spielen, das müsse sie sich gewinnen, wie einen Knäuel, einen Gegenstand, nicht wie etwas Lebendes. Nur dieses Augenspiel sei an ihr das Gefährliche... (239)

The passage reveals the genesis of the title and tries to re-create the complex character of Anna Mahler, as well as Canetti's response to her. In *Das Augenspiel* Canetti gives the eyes powers of communication similar to those of the tongue. Eyes are the means of expression. For Anna Mahler this is certainly the case. Canetti says that Anna Mahler apprehends her "victims" through the power

⁸¹When addressing his reader Canetti is using an approach that in literary criticism approximates the "reader-response strategy." The text--according to reader-response criticism--is not a finished product with fixed formal properties, but is an evolving creation in which the reader brings his own experiences to the text. The text therefore changes according to the experience that each individual brings to it. In Canetti's case the reader is asked to share his experience with that of the writer in order to better comprehend the re-creation. Michael Meyer, ed. *The Bedford Introduction to Literature* (Boston: St. Martin's Press: 1993) 2012-2014.

of her eyes. As a sculptor, she communicates through them. By using the words "Augenspiel," and "Gefährlich," Canetti is giving us a fair understanding of his view of Anna. The word "spiel" connotes superficiality. Anna's danger, in Canetti's view, is her inability to communicate on equal terms. She needs to dominate, and her relationships are much like a cat and mouse game in which she is always the "Jäger" (239) in search of "Opfer." (239)

In the introduction to Canetti's work I said that one of the important facts to be considered were the omissions, which sometimes assumed the same importance as what was included in the text of the autobiography. I made reference to Canetti's abhorrence of war and linked it directly with his obsessive preoccupation with death, so that the omission of the political-historical time in the work is in itself an issue. In *Das Augenspiel*, which encompasses 1931 to 1937, there is only one direct mention of Hitler and the political climate of the time.

Es ist der Mühe wert, den Moment zu besehen, in dem diese
Tagung für moderne Musik stattfand. Es war einige Wochen nach
der Bücherverbrennung in Deutschland. Seit einem halben Jahr war
der Mann mit dem unaussprechlichen Namen an der Macht. Zehn
Jahre zuvor hatte in Deutschland eine wüste Inflation geherrscht.
Zehn Jahren danach standen seinen Truppen tief in Rußland und
hatten auf dem höchsten Gipfel des Kaukasus ihre Fahne
aufgepflanzt... (66)

Canetti does not offer a political view, and his disapproval can only be

gathered by his refusal to write Hitler's name.

But the omission can be explained. Canetti's re-created text represents the initial years of war and persecution when the impact of anti-Semitism thought felt was not totally realized. Hitler's political agenda was not totally clear yet. The text therefore follows the historical experiences and does not intrude into the future. To incorporate more of Hitler and the consequences of his politics consequences in hate autobiographical text would necessitate a futurity that Canetti chooses to ignore.

The autobiography also lacks emotional intensity when the subject re-created is not directly connected with the "mother-son" conflict. It is only here that Canetti gives a subjective and emotional rendering of events. Otherwise, the author remains elusive. Throughout most of the autobiography we gain only a tangential knowledge of Canetti's emotional life while becoming more deeply acquainted with other characters that roam the autobiographical landscape. This lack of emotional involvement, or more precisely his inability or unwillingness to talk about subjects that are often intensely personal, can be taken as an explanation for the omission.⁸²

We shall find, for example, that though we are aware of his relationship with Veza- Canetti's first wife-, much of the relationship is glossed over. Their marriage is simply announced. On the other hand, other experiences which did not

⁸²The most intense part of his emotional experiences, those thoughts or emotions that surface freely and serve as an emotional outlet for Canetti, are found in the jottings of Canetti's diaries.

have the same impact on his life- such as his love for Anna Mahler- are elaborately detailed. We shall see the same characteristic in Neruda's work, which abounds in descriptions of "exotic" emotional involvements but lacks much detail about his wives. In this way the author of the autobiography establishes a distance between himself and his reader. The reader is aware of the relationships but is not necessarily made privy to the most intimate or private details of these relationships. I am not implying that the autobiography ought to offer the reader intimacies, but simply stating that the relationships that are re-created in detail are incorporated in the autobiographical text because they are remarkable experiences that translate into remarkable text. The author has the reader very much in mind when he re-creates these experiences. Others are omitted because of their very importance, a paradox that runs contrary to the autobiographical enterprise itself, but that is consistently represented in these autobiographies. But since the autobiography is not life but " a skillfully wrought impression"⁸³ of this life, these omissions and inclusions show the author's manipulative power of his own "life" through language.

The Importance of the Reader in *Das Augenspiel*

One of the most important factors in the autobiographical enterprise is the manner in which the author approaches his audience.

⁸³Carol Shields, *The Stone Diaries* (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc.,) 340.

If we consider John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*, for example, we find that the author approaches his audience directly. "The reader whom these things do not interest," writes Mill "has only himself to blame if he reads farther, and I do not desire any other indulgence from him than that of bearing in mind, that for him these pages were not written."⁸⁴ Mill makes it clear in his introduction that the intent of the work is to speak to those who are interested in his life. Isabel Allende starts her autobiography speaking directly to her unconscious daughter Paula "Listen, Paula, I am going to tell you a story," writes Allende "so that when you wake up you will not feel so lost."⁸⁵ Though she changes direction midstream, and acknowledges a public readership, the initial address is directed towards her daughter. These direct articulations of purpose offer the reader an explanation of the general direction in which the author will approach the autobiography. In the works of Canetti and Neruda the approach and the intent or direction is masked.

I shall discuss in the Neruda chapter how he compiled essays that appeared as newspaper articles which were later edited to become *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias*. These articles were published for a "public" with the intent to educate this same public about how he became a poet. They had a self-explanatory purpose. As readers of the *Memorias*, though, we are never told of the manner in which the work was assembled and we judge it for its poetic quality, for the

⁸⁴John Stuart Mill, *Autobiography* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1957) 3.

⁸⁵Isabel Allende, *Paula*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996) 3.

beauty of the language as well as for the message that it imparts. The only direct "message" to the reader in *Memorias* is found in the initial vignette where the poet defines himself as a "poetic autobiographer," thus Neruda gives himself a certain poetic license that he denies the "historical biographer."

Canetti's approach to the audience differs from one part of the autobiography to the next. The initial impulse for writing the autobiography came as an effort to help his brother George stay alive. This fact is never revealed in the text of the autobiography.⁸⁶ There are no direct references to the audience in *Die gerettete Zunge* or in *Die Fackel im Ohr*, but in *Das Augenspiel* there are many instances where Canetti speaks directly to the reader, and the "audience" becomes much more palpable. This change of direction takes place because Canetti's brother George died and Canetti needed to change his audience. More importantly, though, the change occurs because in *Das Augenspiel* Canetti rethinks and reevaluates many of his experiences creating the need for an "interlocutor," a role that was absent in the two other works. By using a direct approach to the audience, Canetti asks the reader to introduce his own "imagination" into the already interpretative text of his own life. The work is therefore in parts, no longer a re-creation of the author's past experiences nor an interpretation of them, but a creation whose precepts become malleable by the reader's interpretative powers. "Man muß sich diese Stadt und dieses Kaffeehausleben in ihr vorstellen," (113)

⁸⁶ This fact was revealed by Canetti in one of his speeches, and can be found in the Introduction.

writes Canetti , thus involving the reader directly in the creative process of the autobiography. By prodding the reader's imagination, Canetti is asking the reader to intervene in the text, an attitude that is only found in *Das Augenspiel*.

In order to clarify his own attitudes and feelings Canetti often not only addresses the reader, but goes further and assumes that the reader must empathize with his experience in order to understand it. This often requires a having read Canetti's previous work. When Canetti writes " Man muß sich vorstellen mit welcher Gewalt die unaufhörlichen Anklagen von Karl Kraus auf einen eingewirkt hatten,"(146) he is not using a figure of speech, but asking the reader to reach back into *Die Fackel*, so as to understand his own conflicting feelings. By directly addressing the reader Canetti is appealing for an empathetic reading of the text in order to justify and explain his future actions.

The Function of the Eye

In *Das Augenspiel* it is the eye that becomes the central metaphor of the author's development. The experience is no longer apprehended mainly through sound (speech, language or langue) but through the different " forms" that reality takes. The act of "seeing" becomes a more complex experience as it implies a certain responsibility towards the world . Lawson writes that: "Although the effective use of the eyes does not imply the attrition in hearing ability, the central personal connection in the third volume is fundamentally visual." ⁸⁷ And it is

⁸⁷Lawson 13.

through the discussions that Canetti has with Dr. Sonne that Canetti becomes aware that the responsible use of the faculty of sight signifies a refusal to look away from what is awful, like the Spanish Civil War and the destruction of Guernica, as memorialized in the celebrated painting of Picasso.⁸⁸

The eye therefore, becomes the central image that runs through this work. Canetti learns to know the characters that are re-created in *Das Augenspiel* by "seeing" them, and the principal means of communication between all the characters is visual.

It is in his first encounter with Anna Mahler that the importance of the eye becomes obvious. Canetti plunges into a verbal exposition that breaks with the linearity of historical time. The autobiography becomes discursive in nature allowing Canetti to incorporate a series of observations that move the autobiography from a re-created past to the present of philosophical reasoning. He portrays what Eagan calls "an emotional reality,"⁸⁹ since the thought of "eyes" provokes a kind of verbal reverie that prompts him to elucidate on the different qualities of this organ. In doing so Canetti breaks the linearity of "descriptive time" and from a retrospective and reconstructive past he emerges into a present "now" or a "permanent now." This present "now" reveals itself at the moment of writing. He is "now" expounding for, and explaining to his reader the different ways of apprehension through the "eye." Since the passage evokes an emotion, it

⁸⁸ Lawson 14.

⁸⁹ Eagan 15.

becomes more poetic in nature. Throughout this book stylistic changes parallel the emotional states referred to. The verb "see" and the word "eye" is often repeated in passages to emphasize the importance of the visual experience.

Ich sah sie zuerst. Ich sah ihre Finger, wie sie sich in den Lehm einer überlebensgroßen Figur drückten. Von ihrem Gesicht sah ich nichts,...Ich stand nicht mehr weit von ihr und fühlte mich von ihrem Blick ergriffen. Von diesem Augenblick an ließen mich ihre Augen nicht los... Sie bestand aus Augen, was immer sonst in ihr sah, war Illusion... Wie soll man dieses Ungeheuerliche wahrhaben: Daß Augen geräumiger sind als der Mensch, dem sie zugehören. (72 -73)

In this passage, which describes Canetti's first encounter with Anna Mahler, the author tries to recapture the experience of falling in love. This is accomplished by the repetitive use of the eye imagery and a careful balance between tangible images -" Finger" ," Gesicht", " Lehm"- and more ethereal or emotional ones, such as " Überraschung" " Unerschöpflichkeit" " Ungeheuerliche," which connote a state of mind.

In the subchapter entitled "Anna," which re-creates Canetti's relationship with Anna Malher and his emotional battle with Hermann Scherchen, the eye is constantly described as an organ of expression, communication and dominance. It is in these passages too that the linearity of the narrative is often broken by the use of different verbal tenses. Canetti goes from the past tense, or the recollected past

to the present tense, creating a permanent now which develops at the re-creation of the perception at the moment of creation or writing.

Meine Beobachtung H.s [Hermann Scherchen] in der Straßburger Wochen war durch Umstände geschärft,..(72) (Past recollected)

Es gibt Augen , die man fürchtet, weil sie auf Zerfleischen aus sind, sie dienen dem Erspürer von Beute, die, einmal gewahrt, nicht anderes sein kann; selbst wenn es ihr gelingt zu entkommen, bleibt sie als Beute gezeichnet. Die Starre des unerbittlichen Blicks ist furchtbar. Sie ändert sich nie, kein Opfer hat Einfluß darauf, sie ist für immer vorgebildet. Wer in ihr Feld gerät, ist zum Opfer geworden, nichts gibt es, das er vorbringen könnte und zu retten vermöchte er sich nur vollkommene Verwandlung. (73)

(Permanent now)

In this passage Canetti personalizes the eye and refers to it as a predatory animal. The words "Zerfleischen" and the repetition of " Opfer" bring about and clarify this "animal imagery." This description also ends with the word "Verwandlung" a term and a concept that is important throughout Canetti's work. By "Verwandlung " Canetti means the same transformation he had talked about in Masse und Macht ,whereby an animal in order to escape his persecutor transforms itself.

These passages which express an "emotion"are important in a text that, for the most part, lacks intensity. They reveal the manner in which Canetti allows

himself to depict a situation. He adopts a method of displacement. Instead of describing the emotional impact that Anna Mahler had on him, he discourses on the power of the eye. Nonetheless he is describing, though indirectly, his feelings towards her. This process of displacement which is also used to describe his mother's death, is one more aspect of the emotional hermeticism that Canetti shows throughout the autobiography.

Death and Conclusion

Much in this part of the autobiography centers on the connection of people through their eyes, and ultimately Canetti brings this book to a conclusion with the closing of the eyes. Canetti uses this as a central metaphor to represent his mother's death. It is with this ultimate and definitive act that he also chooses to conclude his autobiography.

The subchapter titled "Tod der Mutter" synthesizes many of the problems that we have dealt with throughout the autobiography: the problem of death, his troubled relationship with his mother, the absence of information about his brother- or the problem of "omissions-" the problem of reality versus fiction, or reality and memory, and finally the recreation of someone else's emotions, thus evading revealing his own. "Tod der Mutter" begins with images that bring to the reader the idea of death. There is a heavy emphasis on the color black, and on descriptions that give us a sense of closure. We can also detect a deeper emotional tone in this part of the text than in the earlier works though considering that the

event that is being re-created is the death of his mother, the restraint is quite remarkable. But there is an obvious emotional change that Canetti allows his reader to observe, and the passage is one of the most subjective re-creations that we find in the autobiography.

Ich fand sie schlafend, die Augen geschlossen. Ganz abgezehrt, nur noch bleiche Haut, so lag sie da, tiefe, schwarze Löcher statt der Augen und wo früher ihre prächtigen weiten Nüstern spielten, unbewegliche schwarze Löcher. Die Stirn schien schmaler, von beiden Seiten geschrumpft. Ich hatte den blick ihrer Augen erwartet und mir war, als hätte sie sie gegen mich verschlossen. Ich suchte nach dem, was an ihr das Kenntlichste war, da sich die Augen versagten, nach ihren großen Nüstern und der gewaltigen Stirn, aber sie hatte keine Erstreckung mehr, sie umfaßte nichts und der Zorn der Nüstern hatte sich an ihre Schwärze verloren.(299)

There is for the autobiographer a double sense of ending which is portrayed here. The closed eyes; the nostrils depicted as black holes, all contribute to this feeling of death and finality. Important too, is the depiction of the nostrils as black holes, not simply because in their darkness they connote death, but also that in their darkness there is a sense of suffocation. We must remember that Canetti's mother dies of lung disease -either cancer or tuberculosis, that is never made clear- and the nostrils are the air passages that are life- rendering.

As in the rest of the autobiography the obvious inclusions and exclusions are present. I said that one of the notable exclusions in Canetti's autobiography is that of his brothers, mainly that of his middle brother. In *Die Fackel im Ohr*, we are "introduced"- very briefly- to Georg, the youngest brother, and the only information that we are given about the middle brother is that he was present at the mother's funeral. Georg is given a more detailed re-creation in this last chapter of *Das Augenspiel*. By doing so, Canetti pays homage to his dead brother's life as well as that of his mother, and re-creates for his reader a relationship that, we gather, he would have wished to experience. By introducing Georg, and depicting his devotion to his mother and his grief at her death we are able to better understand the immense rift that existed between Elias and his mother. Georg Canetti was all that his mother had wished Elias to be. He was a physician and he had devoted his life to her care. "Der jüngste Bruder war," writes Canetti, "was der Älteste hätte sein sollen, auf kein eigenes Leben bedacht, zum Dienst an der Mutter bereit und war sogar, als es für ihn zuviel wurde, krank wie sie geworden." (305) George is used in this last part of the autobiography as the character that allows Canetti to face the realities that were only intimated at in the previous works. Canetti expresses guilt for having realized his life, but even this expression is shown through the actions of others. This chapter is self-analytical, but it is a displaced self-analysis. It is only through his brother that Canetti is able to express his conflict. His love for his mother, his anguished reaction at her rejection, his guilt for having left her are all depicted through and in contrast to the actions of

George

The last two passages of the autobiography are almost surreal in the depiction of grief. A dream-like scene is set up by the simple phrase "Es ist mir" (306) which in its inconclusiveness sets the landscape on a fictional plane.

Memories are no longer clear, so that the scene is re-created with a sense of probability, but not certainty, thus opening up the problem of fiction and reality that has pervaded the autobiography.

And symbolically perhaps, but also characteristically, Canetti chooses to end his autobiography recreating his brother's dramatic farewell from his mother, a valediction in which language, finally becomes the life-preserving tool that Canetti has looked for throughout his life. It is, though, through George and not through Elias' actions that this notion is expressed. By giving George such a prominent voice Canetti displaces his own emotional reality and keeps his own biographical persona distant from the reader.

Er wollte allein sein, um mit ihr zu sprechen...Er wollte, daß nichts ende, alle Verrichtungen gingen in Worte weiter. Seine Worte weckten sie und sie, die erstickt war, hatte wieder Atem. Er weinte nicht; um keinen ihrer Augenblicke zu verlieren; wenn er auf diesem Stuhl saß, wo er sie vor sich hatte, gönnte er sich nichts, das zu einem Verlust für sie entartet wäre...Es hört sich an, als ob er leise zu ihr singen würde, nicht von sich, keine Klage, nur von ihr, nur sie hat gelitten, nur sie darf klagen, er aber tröstet sie und

beschwört sie und verspricht ihr immer wieder, daß sie da ist, sie allein, mit ihm allein, niemand sonst, jeder stört sie, darum will er, daß ich ihn mit ihr allein lasse, zwei oder drei Tage, und obwohl sie begraben ist, liegt sie da, wo sie krank immer war und in Worten holt er sie uns sie kann ihn nicht verlassen. (307-308)

The autobiography's conclusion is a most dramatic one in that it serves Canetti to further his idea of immortality. Language which for Canetti is always used as a tool to defeat death, proves to be the element he needed. As George is able to keep his mother "alive" by the gift of language and imagination, so Canetti using the autobiography as his tool, manages to survive time and oblivion.

CHAPTER FOUR

PABLO NERUDA

The Re-creation of Life in *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias*

" But since the facts which I should then have recalled would have been prompted only by voluntary memory, the memory of the intellect, and since the pictures which that kind of memory shows us preserve nothing of the past itself, I should never have had any wish to ponder over this residue of Combray. "⁹⁰

Confieso que he vivido. Memorias is Pablo Neruda's effort to re-create his life, and to explain his poetry to a reading public. The work was not started as a unit, but was developed as ten long autobiographical pieces which Neruda wrote under the title *The Lives of the Poet* and which were published in *O Cruzeiro International* in 1962. Ten years later when he returned from his ambassadorial post in Paris, he decided to turn the original into a complete coherent volume of memoirs. "The result is," says Bizarro "a book of quiet, close-knit prose, full of unforgettable scenes, and set forth in precise, analytical descriptions, which at times become lyrical flights of near-poetry..."⁹¹

These "lyrical flights of near poetry" appear as vignettes, and often preface or conclude a notebook. They are poetic fragments that give the work a collage-like quality, and as such they congeal the argument-- the book--into a whole.

⁹⁰Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*.(New York: Random House , Inc.,1981) 47.

⁹¹Salvatore Bizarro, *Pablo Neruda. All Poets the Poet*. (New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1979) 126.

Memorias though, becomes his most comprehensive work. In it the poet tries to integrate and put into perspective his entire life and work.

The title of the book somewhat clarifies this search and the direction of the book. The word "confieso" gives us some measure of the subjectivity and the direction of the work. Neruda is not writing a "confesión" or a "confession" but rather is confessing to having "experienced" life. The use of the verb "confieso" in the first person directly points to the "self." The work therefore becomes a very "human" admission to life, and does not take on the magnitude of a penitent prayer. The addition of the word "Memorias" enhances a sense of directness and spontaneity which, if we consider the genesis of the work, is totally absent in the autobiography. I am referring to the fact that the autobiography was first conceived as *Las vidas del poeta*. This title is important when considered in the context of the autobiographical enterprise. There is an implicit division of the "self" in the very title that has to be accounted for. In re-creating his life Neruda admits to the fragmentation of the "self," and allows it to take on different tonalities to express itself. The autobiography of the "poet" thus becomes a unique work of self-representation in that it recreates a totality by the addition of distinctly differentiated parts (lives.)

Hernán Loyola has said that all of Neruda's work is fundamentally autobiographical, and as such, it documents the history and the development of a consciousness. In his poetic works these "autoreferences" will detail Neruda's

efforts to define himself in relation to the concrete world in which he lives.⁹²

Memorias is a prose rendition of this effort.

Though much has been said about the autobiographical nature of all of Neruda's works, the two works that can be considered "explicitly autobiographical" are *Confieso que he vivido*, *Memorias* and *Memorial de Isla Negra*.⁹³ This latter work often appears as a "poetic translation" of *Confieso* and affords an interesting perspective as to the different forms of representation that the "self" can effect. Neruda seems very fond of this type of "reworking," and we shall point out various episodes which can be found as different "versions" of the same experience.⁹⁴

I said in the introduction that the autobiography is a fictive form of self-referential writing, and that the fiction is effected on the level of perception and language. It is on the level of language that we find the sharpest contrast between Canetti and Neruda. In my analysis of Canetti I have said that Canetti uses the autobiography as a "tool" to work out his deep emotional problems, as is the case of *Die gerettete Zunge*, or as an instrument that will help him depict the story of his time as in *Das Augenspiel*. The work is above all the autobiography of a storyteller often lacking an emotional engagement, and always lacking in poetic

⁹²Hernán Loyola, *Los modos de autorreferencia en la obra de Pablo Neruda*. (Chile: Ediciones de la revista Aurora, 1964) 6-7.

imagination.

Neruda on the other hand, is a highly subjective poet and an engaged one, so that what he depicts is not only life, but the life of a poet. The re-creation, and therefore the fictionalization of his life is rendered poetically, using a highly stylized language rich in poetic imagery. Neruda adds to his poetry and autobiography a social consciousness and an understanding of man and his historical importance that is absent in Canetti. .

I must point out too-- as I have done in Canetti --that there is a change in direction in Neruda's poetry that is reflected in the autobiography. The first change will occur with Neruda's writing of his poem "Alturas de Machu Pichu." In Neruda's earlier works, the poet is only aware of Nature's temporal continuity and of man's condemnation to death and silence. "Alturas de Machu Pichu," brings about a change in his perception of man's impermanence.

Hernán Loyola says that in Neruda's earlier works there was an awareness on the part of the poet that only Nature has a temporal continuity. After "Alturas de Machu Pichu" Loyola finds two distinctive zones of awareness:

En la primera (series I a V), Neruda recuerda qué era él, cómo antes él percibía qué sólo en la Naturaleza, y no en el Hombre, se daba la continuidad temporal; solo en la Naturaleza ocurría la alegre perpetuación de la vida, la superación fecunda de la muerte, la incorporación del ser a una corriente interminable de la vida germinadora. En cambio en el Hombre, el tiempo era desintegra-

ción y la muerte era sinónimo de abismo, ciego e infecundo.⁹⁵

In the second part of the poem Neruda comes to understand that man has an historical nature that is preserved through his works. He is "una especie histórica" and it is here that he reveals himself as a whole:

Neruda ha llegado a comprender que el **hombre** es también Naturaleza, pero que, a diferencia del vegetal, es Naturaleza "histórica". El hombre no solo es un ser natural y temporal, sino que constituye una **especie histórica** que siempre se está haciendo a sí misma. Y es en la historia donde se explican sus fracasos, sus angustias, sus deformaciones y sus vicios, su incomunicación, sus miserias y alienaciones...⁹⁶

Neruda's autobiography, as well as his poetic works, are therefore his claim to permanence, as they are the means through which the poet finds integration with society and culture.

The second change in direction comes to Neruda with the Spanish Civil War. His work becomes less of an esthetic instrument and more of a social one.

"Neruda será el combatiente integral, identificado con las tareas constructivas del presente, incorporado a ellas con su poesía. Es por esto que, a partir de entonces, las autorreferencias que Neruda va insertando en sus versos tendrán como denominador común el propósito de ser un poeta de utilidad pública,

⁹⁵ Loyola, 39.

⁹⁶Loyola, 40.

y el afán de destacar con mayor énfasis cada vez, el carácter de "oficio", el sentido profesional que tiene su labor".⁹⁷ He will become a "poeta comprometido," one that *is* the social conscience of his people. Personal agony is relegated to a second level as he begins a more profound search of human understanding. The autobiography and the autobiographical poems reflect this change in direction. In the autobiography there is a poignant recognition of his past work and of his sense of responsibility towards man. There is a sense of death and a re-birth. The old poetry dies to give birth to the strong voice of the future.

At the end of the sixth chapter, "Salí a Buscar Caidos," Neruda inserts a vignette that clarifies and explains the quandary of a poet who realizes that his poetry has been limited or incomplete:

Al final de esta época , como si todo este largo viaje hubiera sido inútil vuelvo a quedarme solo en los territorios recién descubiertos. Como en la crisis de nacimiento, como en el comienzo alarmante y alarmado del terror metafísico de donde brota el manantial de mis primeros versos, como el nuevo crepúsculo que mi propia creación ha provocado, entro en una agonía y en la segunda soledad. Hacia dónde ir? Hacia dónde regresar, conducir, callar o palpitar? Miro hacia los puntos de la claridad y de la oscuridad y no encuentro sino el propio vacío que mis manos elaboraron con cuidado fatal. (209)

⁹⁷ Loyola , 43.

This section is extremely important because it sheds light on the poet's agonizing reflections on his function and his social responsibility. It is the philosophical and moral quest of a man who discovers that his art had explored arid territories, since the sufferings of mankind had remained a neglected concern of his poetry:

Pero lo más próximo, lo más fundamental, lo más extenso, lo más incalculable no aparecía sino hasta ese momento en mi camino. Había pensado en todos los mundos, pero no en el hombre. Había explorado con crueldad y agonía el corazón del hombre; sin pensar en los hombres había visto ciudades, pero ciudades vacías; había visto fábricas de trágica presencia pero no había visto el sufrimiento debajo de los techos, sobre las calles, en todas las estaciones, en las ciudades y en el campo. (209)

Salvatore Bizarro says that the Spanish civil war provided Neruda with the experience necessary to express fully his poetic soul. The inhumanity of the war shocked him out of his private anguish and he became profoundly conscious of his fellow human beings.⁹⁸ Or as Neruda puts it poetically:

A las primeras balas que atravesaron las guitarras de España, cuando en vez de sonidos salieron de ella borbotones de sangre, mi poesía se detiene como un fantasma en medio de las calles de la angustia humana y comienza a subir por ella una corriente de raíces

⁹⁸Bizarro, 166.

y de sangre. Desde entonces mi camino se junta con el camino de todos. Y desde pronto veo que desde el sur de la soledad he ido hacia el norte que es el pueblo, el pueblo al cual mi humilde poesía quisiera servir de espada y de pañuelo, para secar el sudor de sus grandes dolores y para darle un arma en la lucha del pan. (209)

Neruda is often preoccupied with finding the fine balance between a poetry that is too subjective, and therefore almost incomprehensible, and an art form that can express the vision of the common man and therefore serve humanity. He needs to write poetry that speaks to *everyman*. The Spanish Civil War provides Neruda with the center he had been looking for while at the same time reinforcing his communist ideologies.

"El contacto de España" writes Neruda "me había fortificado y madurado. Las horas amargas de mi poesía debían terminar. El subjetivismo melancólico de mis *Veinte poemas de amor* o el patetismo doloroso de *Residencia en la tierra* tocaban a su fin. Me pareció encontrar una veta enterrada, no bajo las rocas subterráneas, sino bajo las hojas de los libros. Puede la poesía servir a nuestros semejantes? Puede acompañar la lucha de los hombres? Yo había caminado bastante por el terreno de lo irracional y de lo negativo. Debía detenerme y buscar el camino del humanismo, desterrado de la literatura contemporánea, pero enraizado profundamente en las aspiraciones del ser humano. (196)

Though Neruda finds a philosophic-anthropological answer to the problem of death, his preoccupation with it will never die. The war and its terrible aftermath

of death and destruction become a central theme in his work. The autobiography can often be read as a historical critique, as the work of a man who is very political, and whose views and ideologies permeate his writings.

Jaime Alazraki says that the main theme of Neruda's poetry up to *España en el corazón* is his recalcitrant loneliness. At the beginning this loneliness, which the poet indulges in, finds relief in love and in dreams. Later on though, nothing seems to ease the pain, and he becomes a poet of death :

Posteriormente todos los bálsamos se tornan ineficaces; la soledad se reconcentra hasta acidularse en una angustia que devora al poeta y su poesía. La muerte corretea por todas las cosas transformando a las ciudades en cementerios y a las casas en tumbas. En este mundo de defunciones, "en donde nada cae, sino sólo la muerte", y el poeta es "un subterráneo solo, una bodega con muertos" y, aterido, se muere de pena.⁹⁹

His preoccupation with death can also be found in the constant "rewriting" of his life. The many versions of the "self" represented either poetically or in prose works become one more self-assuring aspect of survival. But Neruda also finds in "transposition" an answer for his quest for immortality.

" Let me possess you" says Neruda " so you'll endure in me,...consume

⁹⁹Jaime Alazraki, *Poética y poesía de Pablo Neruda*. (New York: Las Americas Publishing Company, 1965) 184.

yourself in flames and give me light."¹⁰⁰

This poet, who had indulged in his own personal pain, suffers an "awakening" as a consequence of the Civil War in Spain. The Spanish Civil War will give Neruda not only a new motive for his poetry but will be "la causa de una conmoción personal que lo enfrenta por primera vez con el drama de su tiempo."¹⁰¹

Neruda, writes Alazraki, develops a new heart. He will no longer be able to look to himself and to his loneliness as a center for his poetry, but will find his own pain and his own happiness mirrored in humanity:

En el prójimo, en sus dolores y alegrías, encuentra Neruda sus propios dolores y alegrías; en las tribulaciones, luchas y derrotas del prójimo, Neruda descubrirá su propia identidad.¹⁰²

This "awakening" or heightened awareness to a suffering humanity will be reflected in the autobiography, especially in the vignettes which as prose poems depict the emotional turmoil that Neruda suffered.

The autobiography also has many "realistic" episodes which are related in straight- forward language and which re-create the everyday life of the poet, but it is generally the awakenings or the realization, such as love and death that are rendered as prose poems with highly stylized diction. Neruda considered himself a

¹⁰⁰Valodia Teitelboim, *Neruda. An Intimate Biography*. trans. Beverly J. De Long-Tonelli, (Austin: University of Texas Press: 1991) 68.

¹⁰¹Alazraki , 185.

¹⁰²Alazraki , 187.

"craftsman," and the autobiography is an extension of the poet's craft. It offers Neruda a different mode of self-representation, and a different "dialogue " with his readers.

The autobiography in its prose rendition allows Neruda to express himself more objectively, rendering a more exact portrayal of reality than that realized in his poetry. "El poeta, en su efusión-expresión ," says Allonso" se eleva como una tromba y arrebatada en su torbellino al lector, identificado con él; el prosista en su explicación-transmisión extiende sus pensamientos ante el lector, los expone entre ambos, como una objetividad en cuyas aras se sacrifica: lo que importa es atinar con lo que es exactamente lo pensado, sin alterar, ni añadir, ni mermar.¹⁰³

I feel, therefore, that it is through the textual analysis of certain episodes that we see how Neruda manages to balance the "rift" between prose and poetry that Alonso alludes to. Neruda incorporates into his prose a poetic tone-- accomplished by the abundant use of metaphors and similes, and thus creates a prose work with poetic "interludes." The work becomes not only a clarification of Neruda's life but of his poetry which is often qualified as "hermetic" .

Infancia y Poesía

An Introduction to the Poet

In "Infancia y Poesía" Neruda sets the tone of the entire autobiography. He situates himself historically-- explaining his birth, family and origins-- as well as

¹⁰³Alonso, 142.

linguistically . He explains himself poetically, and perhaps because he was such a public figure, we can find variants to his recreations.

The very introduction to *Confieso* is an edited edition of the original:

Estas memorias o recuerdos (que he escrito para la revista " *O cruzeiro*", del Brasil) son intermitentes y a ratos olvidadizos porque así precisamente es la vida. La intermitencia del sueño (Solo gracias a la intermitencia de los sueños) nos permiten sostener los días de trabajo. Muchos de mis recuerdos se han desdibujado al evocarlos, han devenido en polvo como un cristal irremediamente herido.

Las memorias del memorialista no son las memorias del poeta. Aquél vivió tal vez menos, pero fotografió mucho más y no recrea con la pulcritud de los detalles. Éste nos entrega una galería de fantasmas sacudidos por el fuego y la sombra de su época. Tal vez no viví en mí mismo; tal vez viví la vida de los otros. De cuanto he dejado escrito en estas páginas se desprenderán siempre-- como en las arboledas de otoño y como en el tiempo de las viñas-- las hojas amarillas que van a vivir y las uvas que revivirán en el vino sagrado

Mi vida es una vida hecha de todas las vidas: las vidas del poeta.(9)

There are a number of important observations made in this introductory piece. We find Neruda's attempt to situate himself as a poet-- a kind of

metamorphic¹⁰⁴ figure in whom experiences are absorbed and transformed to be rendered as poetry--and his definition of autobiography. The distinction he makes about autobiographers is also significant, as it allows his autobiography to create new linguistic landscapes. By differentiating the "historical autobiography" from the "poetic" one, he allows a certain creative latitude to enter into the work. He is no longer constrained by the limits of historical "veracity," and his representation of time can thus become a flexible instrument of representation. Neruda is conscious of the limits of memory, and he points to this problem at the very outset of the work. Furthermore he positions himself linguistically by the use of metaphors which transform a direct statement with an informative intent into a poetic fragment. In the above quoted passage Neruda signifies to his reader a major aspect of his poetic personality. He wants to be perceived as a writer who represents his country and who identifies with its geography. The telluric element is important in all his work. Neruda therefore speaks of "viñas" and "uvas,"-- and he will later speak of the harsh elements of southern Chile--so as to identify

¹⁰⁴ Luis Rosales in his "Prologo" to the *Obras Completas* of Pablo Neruda tries to explain this concept of metamorphosis:

Lo ha visto con acierto Monegal: " Porque la paradoja de esta incesante metamorfosis es que el poeta cambia para seguir siendo el mismo. Los cambios...tienen un sentido unívoco: permitir al poeta desarrollarse a lo largo de una obra y de una vida de constante exigencia creadora: sostener al poeta en un movimiento central, sin paralizar la posibilidad de la aventura. Por eso Neruda (como Goethe) cambia sin descaracterizarse, asume nuevas máscaras para expresar mejor la persona única , huye para quedarse siempre clavado en su mismo centro." " Pablo Neruda: El sistema del poeta. *Revista Iberoamericana*, núms. 82-83, enero-junio 1973, pág. 42; Universidad de Pittsburgh.

Pablo Neruda, *Poesia* , ed, Damaso Alonso. Vol 1 (Bilbao: Editorial Gredos S.A. 1974) 51.

himself with Chile, a country known for its vineyards and wines.

" Infancia y Poesia" appeared first in an " Evocación autobiográfica leída por Pablo Neruda en el salón de Honor de la Universidad de Chile, en Santiago, enero de 1954." The second version appears in *Confieso* as part of the first "cuaderno." Parts of the speech have been directly "transposed" to the latter work, which is an extended version of Neruda's childhood re-creation. Both versions, though, are introduced poetically so as to give the "hearer" or reader a sense of poetry. In his "Evocación" Neruda says: "Para saber y contar y contar para saber...tengo que empezar así esta historia de aguas, plantas, bosques, pájaros, pueblos, porque es eso la poesía, por lo menos mi poesía."¹⁰⁵

In this introduction to "his life" Neruda does not point to the "self" but to the elements that will shape it. It is an interesting and somewhat "unconventional" beginning that points to the challenge of self- representation. The "self" is represented as a text that is molded by its peripheral elements. Within these elements water becomes a dominant feature.

In *Confieso* Neruda begins his re-creation by saying:

Comenzaré por decir sobre los días y años de mi infancia, que mi único personaje inolvidable fue la lluvia. La gran lluvia austral que cae como una catarata del Polo, desde los cielos del cabo de Hornos, hasta la frontera. En esta frontera o Far west de mi patria, nací a la vida, a la tierra, a la poesía y a la lluvia.

¹⁰⁵Pablo Neruda, *Obras completas* Vol.1. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S. A.,1957) 25 .

Por mucho que he caminado me parece que se ha perdido ese arte de llover que se ejercía con un poder terrible y sutil en mi Araucanía natal. Llovía meses enteros, años enteros. La lluvia caía en hilos como largas agujas de vidrio que se rompían en los techos, o llegaba en olas transparentes contra las ventanas, y cada casa era una nave que difícilmente llegaba a puerto en aquel océano de invierno. (15) ¹⁰⁶

In his introductory re-creation Neruda sets the tone for the entire work. He signals to the reader those elements that are most important to him and to his development. Nature, and its often forbidding elements, become the characters that populate this early part of the recreation. A fictionalized landscape is created by Neruda's poetic strategy in which rain becomes "largas agujas de vidrio" and houses become "naves" struggling to stay afloat. We must remember that he is describing a "street," and that by alluding to houses as boats and streets as oceans,

¹⁰⁶In "Oda a la lluvia" from "*Odas Elementales*, this "personaje inolvidable" is represented thus:

...la lluvia
 mar de arriba,
 rosa fresca,
 desnuda,
 voz del cielo,
 violín negro,
 hermosura.
 desde niño
 te amo,
 no porque seas buena,
 sino por tu belleza.

Margarita Aguirre, *Las vidas de Pablo Neruda*, (Santiago de Chile: Empresa Editora Zig-Zag, S. A. 1967) 69.

he creates a very different but very vivid picture . He creates a poetic landscape.

While Neruda re-creates moments of his childhood, he often indulges in what I call "photographic recollections." In them he is able to create a very realist image of his fragmentary past. He accomplishes this -- creating what I had called "narrative lapses" in Canetti-- by changing the verb tense from past to present, thus creating a landscape that has a certain tangibility. "Frente a mi casa," writes Neruda " la calle se convirtió en un inmenso mar de lodo. A través de la lluvia veo por la ventana que una carreta se ha empantanado en medio de la calle. (15)

Luis F. Gonzáles-Cruz speaks of this characteristic or technique which the poet also uses in his poetry:

En "Nacimiento" hay un interesante recurso técnico, existente también en otros varios poemas de *Memorial*, especialmente de *Donde nace la lluvia*: la yuxtaposición de diferentes tiempos verbales. En *Memorial* la "integración" de identidades del poeta corresponde a la "integración" de visiones poéticas. Cuando Neruda recuerda, utiliza el *pasado*, pero vive este pasado tan profundamente a veces, que el pasado se hace presente en su imaginación , y entonces los tiempos *pretérito e imperfecto* son sustituidos de inmediato por el *presente*.¹⁰⁷

This technique in which there is a rapid transition of verbal tenses helps

¹⁰⁷Luis F. Gonzáles-Cruz, *Pablo Neruda y el Memorial de Isla Negra* (Zaragoza: Cometa S. A.,1972) 34.

Neruda, says González-Cruz, recreate a "pasado dinámico."¹⁰⁸ That is, the past is given movement and actuality by the transition of verbal tenses.

In *Las vidas de Pablo Neruda*, Margarita Aguirre has done extensive work showing the "parallelism" or the thematic repetition in Neruda's work. We have seen in the section analyzed above how Neruda has varied his introductions in order to elucidate and integrate different elements of reality into a text. Since we can often use the autobiographical prose works to gain a fuller understanding of the poetry, or an explication of the poetic text, I shall consider a few more "parallelisms" to see how the poet amplifies and expands on certain aspects of his reality. The importance of this parallelism can also be found in that it exemplifies Neruda's need to explore and re-interpret the same experience through the different perspectives of time. It also typifies the autobiographer's need to document his life as a way of attaining permanence. A good example of this "parallelism" and its many consequences can be found in Neruda's recollections of his mother.

In "Infancia y Poesía" he writes: "Allí [en casa de los Masson] había un retrato de mi madre, muerta en Parral, poco después que yo nací. Era una señora vestida de negro, delgada y pensativa. Me han dicho que escribía versos, pero nunca he visto nada de ella, sino aquel hermoso retrato." (11) The only information that we gather here is of her physical appearance, though Neruda has managed to incorporate one more important detail in this very brief informative passage. I am

¹⁰⁸González, 34.

referring to the suggestion that Neruda makes about his mother's poetic abilities.

In this indirect manner Neruda explains, or at least tries to explain, the genesis of his own inspiration.

In *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias* we find the same information, given in a slightly altered form:

Mis padres llegaron de Parral, donde yo nací. Allí, en el centro de Chile, crecen las viñas y abunda el vino. Sin que yo lo recuerde, sin saber que yo la miré con mis ojos, murió mi madre doña Rosa Basoalto. Yo nací el 12 de julio de 1904 y, un mes después, en agosto, agotada por la tuberculosis, mi madre ya no existía. (p.16)

In this version Neruda adds a few informative elements to the description. We learn that his mother died of tuberculosis when he was only six weeks old, and we are given precise time elements. We find also, interpolated, a certain poetic tone in "sin que yo lo recuerde, sin saber que yo la miré...) that adds to the poetry and detracts from the directness of the prose. And it is precisely the notion of remembered time, and of death that will finally take its purely poetic form in the poem "Nacimiento" in *Memorial de Isla Negra*.

Yo no tengo tengo memoria
de paisaje, ni tiempo
ni rostros, ni figuras,
sólo polvo impalpable,
la cola del verano
y el cementerio en donde
me llevaron
a ver entre las tumbas
el sueño de mi madre.

Y como nunca vi
 su cara, la llamé entre los muertos, para verla,
 pero como los otros enterrados,
 no sabe, no oye, no contestó nada,
 y allí se quedó sola, sin su hijo,
 huraña y evasiva
 entre las sombras.¹⁰⁹

"Nacimiento" in its succinctness, constitutes the fullest recreative expression in which the author incorporates and expands on some of the problematics of the autobiographical enterprise. We should point out that though the title of the poem directs us to the poet's birth, there is nothing else in the poem that does so. The historical information that we found in the prose pieces is absent here, and we are directed solely to the poet's experience of loss. The word "memoria" is important here, specially as a referential point, since we have been told at the beginning of the autobiography that memory is a mechanism that is often manipulated in a poetic undertaking. His lack of memory here is somewhat cosmic and it involves an entire period of life. Neruda admits to the lack of "concrete" memories (de paisaje, ni tiempo ni rostros) so that Parral, without being named, is doomed to forgetfulness. The only physical element that survives is the cemetery, and it is here that we can intuit the poetic preoccupation with death.

Neruda's unwillingness to recognize death's finality is uttered in his call to his mother and her inability to come forth and rejoin her son. In "Nacimiento" Neruda expresses poetically, the historical facts that he had incorporated into

¹⁰⁹ Aguirre 39.

Memorias.

AWAKENINGS

I said in the "Introduction" that Neruda's autobiography operates on the level of perception and on the level of language. The linguistic level of re-creation warrants a second subdivision. I shall call the first linguistic subdivision "realistic" because it is here that the poet recollects and reconstructs scenes that have historical veracity, and that though often transformed through poetic imagery, they are nevertheless "true". These episodes generally re-create events that are more concrete in nature, such as Neruda's meetings and dealings with the poets of his time, or his work experiences. The second level I shall call "mythic" because beyond the reality of the recollected scene we find a mythical connotation. At this level we find the re-creation of an awareness, an awakening, a sudden realization, a fall from Paradise, the birth of a consciousness that often takes place beyond the reality being described. I have chosen three scenes that will exemplify what I have called "awakenings." They reveal to Neruda the most important of human experiences such as the awareness of love, death and fraternity. In the autobiography these "revelations" are poetically implied, leaving the reader to decipher a second level of meaning. The scene of the toy sheep which is included in the autobiography is also incorporated into a speech that Neruda delivered. I shall use both since it is in the latter essay where Neruda "explains" the importance of the experience.

Recuerdo también que una vez, buscando los pequeños objetos y los minúsculos seres de mi mundo en el fondo de mi casa, encontré un agujero en una tabla del cercado. Miré a través del hueco y vi un terreno igual al de mi casa., baldío y silvestre. Me retiré unos pasos porque vagamente supe que iba a pasar algo. De pronto apareció una mano. Era la mano pequeñita de un niño de mi edad.

Cuando me acerqué ya no estaba la mano y en su lugar había una diminuta oveja blanca.

Era una oveja de lana desteñida. Las ruedas con que se deslizaba se habían escapado. Nunca había visto yo una oveja tan linda. Fui a mi casa y volví con un regalo que dejé en el mismo sitio: una piña de pino, entrabierta, olorosa y balsámica que yo adoraba. (.23)

The scene is important in that it depicts a unique experience for Neruda. It signifies a sacrifice and a gift-- it is the offering of something that the child loved as an exchange for something given to him. Both gestures are emblematic of Neruda's very existence as a poet. For Neruda the simple exchange of toys between two children became a symbol of solidarity and love between the poet and his audience. It becomes a metaphor for human love.

This part becomes clear in the essay "Infancia y Poesía." The directness that we find in this part of the essay is due to the fact that it was delivered as a speech, and as such it is directed to an immediate public.

...Conocer la fraternidad de nuestros hermanos es una maravillosa

acción de la vida. Conocer el amor de los que amamos es el fuego que alimenta la vida. Pero sentir el cariño de los que no conocemos, de los desconocidos que están velando nuestro sueño y nuestra soledad, nuestros peligros o nuestros desfallecimientos, es una sensación aún más grande y más bella porque extiende nuestro ser y abarca todas las vidas.

Aquella ofrenda traía por primera vez a mi vida un tesoro que me acompañó más tarde: la solidaridad humana. La vida iba a ponerla en mi camino más tarde, destacándola contra la adversidad y la persecución.¹¹⁰

There is a second scene found in both the autobiography and the autobiographical speech in which the two levels of representation are very well defined. The "realistic" aspect of the re-creation is to be found in the careful re-creation of an historical episode. It finds its "mythic" element in the recognition of death. This episode explains the child's recognition of death's finality as well as the adult's preoccupation with it. In the autobiography, the episode becomes a reinterpretation; a fictionalized version of one of the great discoveries of life: its finality.

Me lo entregaron casi muerto. Bañé sus heridas y le empujé pedacitos de pan y de pescado a la garganta. Todo lo devolvía. Sin

¹¹⁰ Neruda, *Obras completas* Vol.1, 37-38.

We can not forget that Neruda was a very political man, and because of his communist affiliation, he suffered political persecution and isolation till the ascent of Salvador Allende as president of Chile. When he speaks about "isolation" and "adversity" he is speaking about his forced asylum in Italy.

embargo, fue reponiéndose de sus lastimaduras, comenzó a comprender que yo era su amigo. Y yo comencé a comprender que la nostalgia lo mataba. Entonces, cargando el pesado pájaro en mis brazos por las calles, lo llevaba al río. Él nadaba un poco, cerca de mí.

Yo quería que pescara y le indicaba las piedritas del fondo, las arenas por donde se deslizaban los plateados peces del sur. Pero él miraba con ojos tristes la distancia.

Así cada día, por más de veinte, lo llevé al río y lo traje a mi casa.

El cisne era tan grande como yo. Una tarde estuvo más encimismado, nadó cerca de mí, pero no se distrajo con las musarañas con que yo quería enseñarle de nuevo a pescar.

Se estuvo muy quieto y lo tomé de nuevo en brazos para llevármelo a casa. Entonces, cuando lo tenía a la altura de mi pecho, sentí que se desenrollaba una cinta, algo como un brazo negro me rozaba la cara. Era su largo y ondulante cuello que caía. Así aprendí que los cisnes no cantan cuando mueren. (30-31)

Neruda incorporates his message into a clear and simple landscape, but there is a sub-text that we must be aware of. Behind the simplicity of the language there is the implicit picture of the child's awareness of love and longing. The scene is developed as a lesson, and it is imparted as such.

Though the passage obviously refers to "death" the word itself never

appears in the text but is metaphorically represented in the falling of the swan's neck.

In this last sentence we find the mythic sense or the "revelation." It is a young child's expulsion from Paradise, the death of his innocence, and the awakening to the realization that life is impermanent and precarious. It is a child's vivid encounter with death. "Así aprendí que los cisnes no cantan cuando mueren."

The last episode in the first chapter of the autobiography is called "El Amor Junto al Trigo" and it must be explained since it involves these two levels of meaning that I have referred to. The lesson here is less subtle than in the episode described above, but important nonetheless. "El Amor Junto al Trigo" describes Neruda's first encounter with physical love and his consequent loss of innocence. It is also a good example of the style that is pervasive in the autobiography. A mixture of realistic details and poetic language give Neruda's autobiography its unique characteristic.

No había luna pero las estrellas parecían recién mojadas por la lluvia y, sobre el sueño ciego de todos los demás, solamente para mí titilaban en el regazo del cielo.

Luego me quedé dormido. Desperté de pronto porque algo se aproximaba a mí, un cuerpo desconocido se movía debajo de la paja y se acercaba al mío. Tuve miedo. Ese algo se arrimaba lentamente.

Sentía quebrarse las briznas de paja, aplastadas por la forma desconocida que avanzaba. Todo mi cuerpo estaba alerta,

esperando.

Tal vez debía levantarme o gritar. Me quede inmóvil. Oía una respiración muy cercana a mi cabeza.

De pronto avanzó una mano sobre mí, una mano grande trabajadora, pero una mano de mujer...

Poco a poco mi temor se cambió en placer intenso. Mi mano recorrió una cabellera con trenzas, una frente lisa, unos ojos de párpados cerrados, suaves como amapolas. Mi mano siguió buscando y toqué dos senos grandes y firmes, unas anchas y redondas nalgas, unas piernas que me entrelazaban, y hundí los dedos en un pubis como musgo de las montañas. Ni una palabra salía o salió de aquella boca anónima. (41-42)

This love scene brings a conclusion to a child's life and represents the beginning of adulthood. It is also the last scene in the chapter "Infancia y Poesía." so that it becomes literally a double ending of "infancia."

Taken in its totality, " Infancia y Poesía" is an important chapter as it re-creates Neruda's infancy , explains the genesis of his poetry and the development of his poetic mind. From this point on most of the re-creation is anecdotal and explanatory. The autobiography helps clarify many of Neruda's poetic notions, and some of the "hermeticism" that has been attributed to his poetry will fall away. The autobiography functions as an explanation of text as well as life, thus satisfying the

original intent of the work.¹¹¹

The Vignettes

Italicized, opening or closing chapters, the vignettes are parenthetical interludes that fill a poetic need. They are explorations into poetry or into experiences that do not quite fit in the context of the autobiography. They are autobiographical afterthoughts, episodes that owe their existence to sudden bursts of poetic inspiration,"-- as is the case of "El Bosque Chileno"-- or of recollections, as in "Álvaro. " We can also speculate that since most of the vignettes can be considered prose poems-- because of the frequent use of poetic images such as personifications, metaphors and simile-- they are intended to give the reader a sense of poetry, and a poetic understanding of the poet, within the context of a prose work. That is, there are syntactical changes that take place in many of these vignettes which correspond to a poetic landscape, and which force the reader to identify with a poetic experience.

These poetic "intermissions" are often used to introduce, within the poetic landscape, scathing personal or dissenting ideas on history and society. And since in the autobiography they are italicized, they do appear as "poetic afterthoughts"

¹¹¹I have argued that the autobiography, written in episodes and published in a magazine, works as an informative organ. As such, it involves what Philippe Lejeune calls a "pact" with the reader. This "pact" is represented in Neruda by the directness with which he approaches his reader. In the vignette "Mi Primer Poema" Neruda speaks directly to an audience. "Ahora, " he says, "voy a contarles alguna historia de pájaros." (30) Neruda "uses " the autobiography not merely as a means to find coherence to his life, but to explain his life, his poetry, and his *political ideology*.

that can often be used as windows to the more realistic prose work that they either preface or conclude.

I shall analyze a few of these vignettes so as to determine their form as well as their function.

"El Bosque Chileno" is the introductory vignette, and as such it is used by the poet to locate himself and his poetry in a physical landscape. Neruda wants to be identified as a Chilean poet, one who identifies himself with the geographical aspects of the land. The harsh physical reality of the land and its consequences on life become the primary colors of Neruda's poetry. It is therefore important for him to introduce himself through a landscape since he wants this landscape to become his identifying mark.

In "El Bosque Chileno" Neruda creates the poetic landscape of his childhood and youth:

...Bajo los volcanes, junto a los ventisqueros, entre los grandes lagos, el fragante, el silencioso, el enmarañado bosque chileno...Se unden los pies en el follaje muerto, crepitó una rama quebradiza,...Me entra por las narices hasta el alma el aroma salvaje del laurel, el aroma oscuro del boldo...Un tronco podrido: Que tesoro!...Hongos negros y azules le han dado orejas, rojas plantas parásitas lo han colmado de rubíes, otras plantas perezosas le han prestado sus barbas y brota, veloz, una culebra desde sus entrañas podridas, como una emanación, como que al tronco muerto se le

escapara el alma...El invierno vegetal susurra apenas hasta que una tempestad ponga en acción toda la música terrestre.

... Quien no conoce el bosque chileno, no conoce este planeta.

... De aquellas tierras, de aquel barro, de aquel silencio, he salido yo a andar, a cantar por el mundo. (13-14)

This vignette introduces the first "cuaderno," which is entitled "El joven provinciano." It is stylistically representative of the manner in which these vignettes are going to be used. "El bosque Chileno" serves to introduce Neruda to his reading public, and at the same time is used to represent his poetic style. He uses highly stylized language and the metaphors that help bring about the physical metamorphosis of the landscape. For Neruda this forest is a microcosm of the world, and it is from here that the poet, like an Adamic figure, will be born to "sing" his poetry. In the idea of changing Nature, one can also discern Neruda's problematic of time, and his awareness of the temporal continuity of Nature. This concept is prevalent in the earlier parts of his work.¹¹² "Un tronco podrido" is therefore transformed by the metaphoric language into a vibrant jewel-like covered object. It also connotes continuity as there is life springing from death. The vignette here serves to incorporate poetry and concept into the very text of the autobiography.

In "La Palabra" Neruda's defines his relationship to and his love of language. He also incorporates in the vignette, subtly, poetically but very sternly,

¹¹²Loyola, 39.

his disapproval of the Spanish conquistador who, according to Neruda, simply came to the New World to pilfer it.

...Todo lo que usted quiera, sí señor, pero son las palabras las que cantan, las que suben y bajan...Me prosterno ante ellas...Las amo, las adhiero, las persigo, las muerdo, las derrito...Amo tanto las palabras...Las inesperadas...Las que glotonamente se esoneran, se acechan, hasta que de pronto caen...

Qué buen idioma el mío, qué buena lengua heredamos de los conquistadores torvos...

... Éstos andaban en zancadas por las tremendas cordilleras, por las Ámericas encrespadas, buscando patatas, butifarras, frijolitos, tabaco negro, oro, maíz,...Por donde pasaban quedaba arrasada la tierra...Pero a los bárbaros se le caían de las botas, de las barba...las palabras luminosas que se quedaron aquí resplandecientes. (77-78)

In the vignette entitled "Las Máscaras y la Guerra" Neruda describes a battle between the Republicans and Franco's soldiers. This scene functions on a multiplicity of linguistic levels. We have the "realistic" level as the re-creation is effected with an abundance of realistic details:

...Las ventanas se partieron en pedacitos...Restos de plomo encontré en el suelo, entre mis libros...Pero mis máscaras se habían ido...Mis máscaras recogidas en Siam, en Bali, en Sumatra, en el Archipiélago Malayo, en Bandoeng...Doradas, cenicientas, de color

tomate, con cejas plateadas, azules, infernales, ensimismadas, mis máscaras eran el único recuerdo de aquel primer Oriente al que llegué solitario y que me recibió con su olor a té, a estiércol, a opio, a sudor, a jazmines intensos, a frangipán , a fruta podrida en las calles...

...Muchas de ellas quedaron en astillas y sangrientas, allí mismo...Otras rodaron desde mi quinto piso, arrancadas por un disparo...Frente a ella se habían establecido las avanzadas de Franco...Frente a ellas ululaba la horda analfabeta de los mercenarios...Desde mi casa treinta máscaras de dioses del Asia se alzaban en el último baile, el baile de la muerte...(187)

The descriptive wealth of this episode helps us visualize the re-created scene. The usage of descriptive adjectives such as "doradas," "cenicientas," and "ensimismadas" helps bring to life a chaotic painting of destruction. The personalized masks bring us the image and feel of the Orient. Neruda assails our sense of sight with the distraught images of broken masks while our sense of smell is awakened by recalling the smell of tea , dung, opium, perspiration , sweet jasmine and rotten fruit. Pleasurable as well as very unpleasant smells are evoked to create a very realistic picture of a street in an Oriental land.

" Las Máscaras y la Guerra" also functions on a "mythic" level since in the episode we have the voice of a revelation. In this scene as in the scene of the swan, there is the sudden realization of precariousness, of finiteness and of fragility. In

this case it also refers to life but extends concretely to Neruda's knowledge of a Spain that was not to survive.

...Miré hacia lejos, más allá de la ciudad universtaria, hacia las planicies, hacia los castillos antiguos...Me pareció vacía España... Me pareció que mis últimos invitados ya se habían ido para siempre...Con máscaras o sin máscaras, entre los disparos y las canciones de guerra, la loca alegría, la increíble defensa, la muerte o la vida, aquello había terminado para mí...Era el último silencio después de la fiesta...Después de la última fiesta. De alguna manera, con las máscaras que se fueron, con las máscaras que cayeron, con aquellos soldados que nunca invité, se había ido para mi España... (187-188)

The masks, in this vignette, become a symbol for the death of Spain as it had been known to the poet. In the context of the autobiography the vignette is effective in that it allows Neruda to express poetically and retrospectively an experience of war and destruction that will fundamentally change the direction of his poetry. Neruda's work becomes less subjective and more socially and politically oriented after the Spanish Civil War. The vignette offers us a point of reference for this change of direction.

In "La Poesía" Neruda speaks directly about the function of poetry and its relationship to the reader.

Neruda became increasingly concerned about the extraordinary amount of

exclusionist literature that was being produced. According to Neruda, this was a literature that did not identify itself with the common man or with the causes that he was fighting. It therefore became "unimportant." The concept of art for art's sake represented by such poets as Darío in which the only important element is the language itself, is dismissed by Neruda at this time as he becomes increasingly the poet of the people. Neruda's poetry voices the people's pain, their anguish and their discontent thus becoming an "arte comprometido."

" Cuánta obra de arte... Ya no caben en el mundo..." says Neruda, "Hay que colgarlas fuera de las habitaciones...Cuánto libro...Cuánto librito...Quién es capaz de leerlos?" (359) This vignette obviously written after Neruda's "conversion" reflects the poet's philosophical approach to literature in general and poetry in particular. The word "librito" is not only used as the diminutive form of "libro," meaning small book, but carries the connotation of "unimportant."

Pero esta publicación de poeta a poeta no me tienta, no me provoca, no me incita sino a emboscarme en la naturaleza, frente a una roca y a una ola, lejos de las editoriales, del papel impreso...La poesía ha perdido su vínculo con el lejano lector... Tiene que recobrarlo... Tiene que caminar en la oscuridad y encontrarse con el corazón del hombre, con los ojos de la mujer, con los desconocidos de las calles, de los que a cierta hora crepuscular, o en plena noche estrellada, necesitan aunque sea no más que un solo verso...
...Hay que perderse entre los que no conocemos para que de pronto

recojan lo nuestro de la calle, de la arena, de las hojas caídas
 mil años en el mismo bosque..
 y tomen tiernamente ese objeto que hicimos nosotros...Sólo
 entonces seremos verdaderamente poetas...En ese objeto
 vivirá la poesía. (360)

Neruda uses the vignette to reaffirm his notion of the poet as a "craftsman" whose craft is respectable and useful. He wants to dispel the notion of poetry as the work of the "dilettante," the social outcast, or the idle , and to reaffirm its respectability.

In " Álvaro" Neruda changes the tone of his narration, and creates for his reader the image of the romantic "anti-hero." The vignette is important because it portrays a less self-involved Neruda who is willing to share the re-created landscape with another character.

Álvaro is a picaresque figure who incites Neruda to participate in schemes and adventures that the poet would never have indulged in on his own. Álvaro becomes all that Neruda dreads and wishes for. He represents activity, productivity and freedom as well as lost or wasted energy. Álvaro works on dichotomies. "...Ahora," says Neruda, " se llama Álvaro de Silva..." (107) The adverb "ahora" alerts us to the fact that Álvaro has changed his name. He complements Neruda because his brilliant mind is not set into patterns, but seems fluid and electric:

Vive en New York...Casi toda la vida la pasó en la selva

neoyorkina...

Lo imagino comiendo naranjas a horas insultantes, quemando con el fósforo el papel de los cigarillos, haciendo preguntas vejatorias a medio mundo...

Siempre fue un maestro desordenado, poseedor de una brillante inteligencia, inteligencia inquisitiva que parece no llevara a ninguna parte, sino a Nueva York.

Era en 1925...Entre las violetas que se le escapaban de la mano cuando corría a llevárselas a una transeúnte desconocida, con la cual quería acostarse de inmediato, sin saber ni cómo se llamaba, ni de dónde era...

...por fin veíamos al antiprovinciano del los sueños, que todos los provincianos habíamos querido ser...(107)

Stylistically this vignette follows the modes and moves of the character described. In his use of short sentences and broken phrases Neruda manages to evoke the feeling of restlessness and confusion that plagues Álvaro. He also depicts himself as Álvaro's complete opposite. "...Yo adonde llego," says Neruda, "asumo un sueño vegetal, me fijo un sitio y trato de echar alguna raíz, para pensar, para existir..." Álvaro, on the other hand, needs continuous movement. Neruda also tries to emphasize the importance of a poet's productivity by highlighting Álvaro's unproductive poetic life. He includes in the vignette the notion of impermanence:

...No sale de él la obra que siempre se esperó...Será que no se le da la gana...

...Será porque no puede hacerla...Porque está tan ocupado...Porque está tan desocupado..Pero lo sabe todo, lo mira todo a través de los continentes con esos ojos azules intrépidos, con ese tacto sutil que deja sin embargo que se escurra entre sus dedos la arena del tiempo...(108)

"El Opio" is an insightful description of an experience in an opium den in India and a social comment on the use of the drug. Neruda was so taken by the use of opium in Asia that he not only re-created the experience in the autobiography, but he also wrote a poem called "El Opio en el Este" in which he treats the subject matter. Essentially "El Opio" is a demythologization of the opium experience. It re-creates the poet's experience with the drug and his realization that opium is a powerful tool for the oppression of people. It is a scathing commentary on the west, but more precisely on England's role in the opium wars.

In "El Opio en el Este" Neruda says:

Ya desde Singapur olía a opio.
 El buen inglés sabía lo que hacía.
 En Ginebra tronaba
 contral los mercaderes clandestinos
 y en las Colonias cada puerto
 echaba un tufo de humo autorizado
 con número oficial y licencia jugosa.
 El gentleman oficial de Londres
 vestido de implacable rruiseñor
 (con pantalón rayado y almidón de armadura)
 trinaba contra el vendedor de sombras,

pero aquí en el oriente
se desenmascaraba
y vendía el letargo en cada esquina.¹¹³

Neruda's poem is clear in his condemnation of England and its deceitful practices. He condemns the hypocrisy and self-serving attitude of the English who denounce the use of the drug in Europe, while at the same time selling it in the Colonies.

In the vignette Neruda's criticism is subtle but present, while at the same time he manages to give a very insightful picture of the opium experience. In the context of the autobiography, this vignette acts as an addendum. It incorporates poetically an experience that as 'text' would otherwise be left outside of the re-creation. The experience of opium is used as an extra-explanatory text that allows the poet to expand on the historical text and to fix it in time.

Neruda writes:

...Había calles enteras dedicadas al opio...Sobre bajas tarimas se extendían los fumadores...Eran los verdaderos lugares religiosos de la India...No tenían ningún lujo ... Todo era tablas sin pintar, pipas de bambú y almohadas de loza china...

Flotaba un aire de decoro y austeridad que no existía en los templos...(126)

After painting this cold and bare picture, in which the opium dens are

¹¹³Pablo Neruda, " El Opio en el Este" *Obras completas* vol.II (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S. A. 1957) 543-544.

equated with temples, he describes *his* experience with the drug. and the sudden knowledge of what lies beyond the dream, beyond the consciousness of the men in the opium den. Much like DeQuincy in his "*Confessions of an Opium Eater*," -- a work that he seems to refer to--Neruda feels the need to "know" the experience of opium, only to come to the realization that opium is used as an equalizer. It is through opium and only through opium that the poor and oppressed find a semblance of freedom and equality.

Fumé una pipa...No era nada...Era un humo caliginoso, tibio y lechoso...Fumé cuatro pipas y estuve cinco días enfermo, con náuseas que me venían desde la espina dorsal, que me bajaban del cerebro...Y un odio al sol, a la existencia...

El castigo del opio...Pero aquello no podía ser todo...Tanto se había dicho, tanto se había escrito, tanto se había hurgado en los maletines y en las maletas, tratando de atrapar en las maletas el veneno, el famoso veneno sagrado...Había que vencer el asco..

Debía conocer el opio, saber el opio, para dar mi testimonio...Fumé muchas pipas, hasta que conocí...No hay sueño, no hay imágenes, no hay paroxismo...Hay un debilitamiento melódico, como si una nota infinitamente suave se prolongara en la atmósfera...Un desvanecimiento, una oquedad dentro de uno...Cualquier movimiento, del codo, de la nuca, cualquier sonido lejano de carruaje, un bocinazo o un grito callejero, entran a formar parte de un todo, de

una reposante delicia...

Comprendí por qué los peones de plantación, los jornaleros, los *rickshamen* que tiran y tiran del *ricksha* todo el día, se quedaban allí de pronto, oscurecidos, inmóviles...El opio no era el paraíso de los exotistas que me habían pintado, sino la escapatoria de los explotados...Todos aquellos fumadores eran pobres diablos...

(126)

The vignette serves as an introductory piece to Neruda's re-creation of his life in Ceylon , Colombo and Singapore. He uses the vignette to summarily introduce his social critique, and to create the picture of a poet involved in the business of life.

Inclusions and Exclusions in Neruda's *Memorias*

In the analyses of Canetti's work I pointed out the remarkable inclusions that were found in this autobiography, such as Marek or the character called "the executioner," and exclusions, such as any detail about his middle brother, or anything that was intimate in nature, such as his life with Veza. I concluded that many of the inclusions became part of the autobiography because of Canetti's fascination with the "grotesque" and the unusual. The characters included had often lived as approximations in Canetti's fictions, and seemed transposed into the factual, historical text of the autobiography. Their inclusions were validated by their value as "stories." The exclusions were explained as Canetti's inability or

unwillingness to detail for a reader parts of his life that he deemed either too self-revelatory,-- as his life with his wife Veza can be construed as--, or as in the case of his brother, because his influence was simply tangential.

In Neruda's autobiography we find the same problem. The autobiography re-creates characters and situations that are not always justified as important or central to an existential experience, but who seemed to have survived because of their peculiar qualities or their distinctive and eccentric nature. That seems to be the case of Novoa or Zoilo Escobar.

Zoilo Escobar is a strange and elusive character who seems to evolve from a world of unreality and fantasy that intrigues and fascinates Neruda. The inclusion of this episode also allows Neruda to include in the larger context of the autobiographical text a text that is independent and functions as a self-contained short story. It has above all anecdotal value-- an issue that is important if we remember that Neruda is writing his autobiography directly for and to a reader.¹¹⁴

The introduction of Novoa in the autobiography is interesting in that it allows Neruda to incorporate a unique character "uno de nuestros locos favoritos," and at the same time introduce poetically more existential matters such as poverty

¹¹⁴Zoilo Escobar, an old recluse whom Neruda had met while living in Valparaíso, is described as a small old man who daily performed "una gimnasia de anacoreta" and whose most precious possessions were a Stradivarius, which nobody had ever been allowed to touch, and a formal black suit, which nobody had ever seen him wear. At Don Zoilo's death and after the burial, - at which time Don Zoilo gets to wear his black suit- it is discovered that the violin was missing.

Las cuerdas del Stradivarius no pudieron llorar su partida. Nadie sabía tocarlo. Y, además, no apareció el violín cuando se abrió el armario. Tal vez voló hacia el mar, o hacia Nueva York, para consumir los sueños de Don Zoilo. (84)

or death. The passage must also be noted because of its linguistic difficulties. In recreating the city of Valparaíso, Neruda introduces a prose poem that presents some of the difficulties of interpretation attributed to many of his "hermetic" poems. There are clear images of the "earthquake" itself, but when the questions become more existential the language changes into a more obscure, metaphoric language.

Neruda says: "Todo comienza a veces por un vago movimiento, y los que duermen despiertan." Here we have a clear image of the beginning of an earthquake happening at night, as the mention of "despiertan" implies. Then the language changes and becomes more obscure: "El alma entre sueños se comunica con profundas raíces, con su hondura terrestre." says Neruda, "Siempre quiso saberlo. Ya lo sabe." The question the poet seems to be asking as well as the answer that he finds are probable references to the question of death and immortality. Since Neruda embraces the communist doctrine and therefore denies God, the existential questions that he raises are more difficult to answer. Neruda defines man in a solitary landscape where he is left to face his mortality with no chance of redemption. " Luego, en el gran estremecimiento, no hay donde acudir, porque los dioses se fueron, las vanidosas iglesias se convirtieron en terrones triturados. "

The last part of the passage is very clear. The language captures man's helplessness in the face of a cataclysmic disaster as well as the guilt of the survivor.

El pavor no es el mismo del que corre del toro iracundo, del puñal que amenaza o del agua que se traga. Éste es el pavor cósmico, una

instantánea inseguridad, el universo que se desploma y se deshace.

Y mientras tanto suena la tierra con un sordo trueno, con una voz que nadie le conocía.

El polvo que levantaron las casas al desplomarse , poco a poco se aquieta. Y nos quedamos solos con nuestros muertos y con todos los muertos, sin saber por qué seguimos vivos. (p.88)

By including these passages in the autobiography Neruda incorporates and re-creates experiences that are not just personal, but have an existential scope. It also allows Neruda to reinforce his disapproval of the church, thus giving the passage a slightly political overtone.

Other passages are incorporated to allow Neruda to add, besides the vignettes, more prose poems in this prose work. They are incorporated mainly to allow Neruda to express himself poetically. The only important element in these passages is the language and the imagery that they convey.

Let us consider the description of the staircases of the city of Valparaíso.

Las escaleras parten de abajo y de arriba y se retuercen trepando.

Se adelgazan como cabellos, dan un ligero reposo, se tornan verticales. Se marean. Se precipitan.

Se alargan. Retroceden. No terminan jamás. (88)

The staircases described here have the characteristics of a Bosch painting. They are torturous in their twisted forms, and have lifelike qualities. They have a sense of movement. All these perceptions which the reader is given to consider are

brought about by the almost repetitive use of verbs as well of the reflexive pronoun "se". By using short phrases such as "Se marean", "Se precipitan", "Se alargan" the image becomes clearer and more concise. The entire spectrum of the twisted stairs seems to take on an extra layer of meaning. The world is represented succinctly with these images of chaos, and the human dimension is added to this world by the rhetorical questions that Neruda poses immediately after the above description.

Cuántas escaleras? Cuántos peldaños de escaleras? Cuántos pies en los peldaños? Cuántos siglos de pasos, de bajar y subir con el libro, con los tomates, con el pescado, con las botellas, con el pan?
Cuántos miles de horas que desgastaron las gradas hasta hacerlas canales por donde circula la lluvia jugando y llorando?(88)

Again a poetic landscape is created by using carefully designed images that slightly change from question to question to finally conclude in the creation of a "verbal picture" that gives a sense of chaotic helplessness. Neruda chooses in this instance, as he often does, to progress from a certain allusiveness, represented by the rhetorical questions, to the concrete imagery of feet going up and down the stairs, holding books or carrying such matters as tomatoes, fish, bread and drink. Lastly, the rain is personified and we are given the image of worn steps onto which the rain falls playfully and with the sound of crying. The stairs and the rain are described and placed in the narrative so as to represent a world of chaos and of pain.

He generally follows these observations with images that are much more

concrete, but which again suggest more than they describe.

Escaleras que subió el marinero que volvía del Asia y que encontró
 en su casa una nueva sonrisa o una terrible ausencia! Escaleras por
 las que bajó como un meteoro negro un borracho que caía! (89)¹¹⁵

One would expect to find romantic recollections associated with the

¹¹⁵In this section, which seems to be specially rich in poetic descriptions, we find some that could be read as prose poems filled with images rich not only descriptively but in implied and suggestive meanings.

Yo he vivido entre estos cerros aromáticos y heridos. Son cerros succulentos en que la vida golpea con infinitos extramuros, con caracolismo insondable y retorcijón de trompeta. En la espiral te espera un carusel anaranjado, un fraile que descende, una niña descalza sumergida en su sandía, un remolino de marineros y mujeres, una venta de la más oxidada ferretería, un círculo minúsculo en cuya carpa sólo caben los bigotes del domador, una escala que sube a las nubes, un ascensor que asciende cargado de cebollas, siete burros que transportan agua, un carro de bomberos que vuelve de un incendio, un escaparate en donde se juntaron botellas de vida o muerte. (91)

One must note the careful selection of language to accomplish this highly poetic landscape. Neruda describes himself as having lived not between mountains but "cerros aromáticos y heridos."

The word "cerros" robs the mountains of a certain majesty, since they are denied height, but they are given a human-like quality that in many ways seems to reflect the conditions of life. Beauty is suggested by the word "aromático" since it immediately opens the reader's mind onto a picture of flowery beauty. The word "heridos" used to describe a high hill or mountain suggests, through the use of personification, that more than a simple description of a place, a condition of life is being represented. This sense is augmented by words such as "succulentos" a word normally applied to describing something eatable. Neruda's use of this word in connection with "cerros" implies "richness", a sense of a place teeming with life. His description of the life in the city is given by short descriptive "strokes", as "una niña descalza sumergida en su sandía". The girl is not described as simply eating a piece of watermelon, but as submerged in it, awakening in us a vivid, almost pictorial image. A sense of the complexity of life is given by using words such as "caracolismo", "retorcijón" and "espiral". Here the image is always of twists and spirals, an almost Dantesque picture.

By using these highly poetic images as well as succinct language, Neruda is able to produce verbal "pictures" that incorporate the visual and the implied in a manner that is unique to the poet. He is able to incorporate in his autobiography not only the re-creations of a memory but to process, as it were, this memory into a poetic re-creation.

description of women characters, or a sense of tenderness or humanness as Neruda re-creates episodes that involve other human beings; surprisingly though, Neruda becomes more "human" and approachable in recollections that involve animals. Less dramatic, though very human in content are the episodes of the mongoose and the sheep. Both episodes, which occur when the author is a grown-up, show us a tender human side of Neruda that is sometimes missing in the rest of the re-creation. We meet, as it were, a man touched not only by the great causes of humanity, but also by simple creatures, as he recognizes that they too are able to give value to our lives and enrich our experiences.

Connected with the story of the mongoose we find the topic of loneliness and isolation. It is perhaps because of the bleakness of this period of Neruda's life that the poet finds light and inspiration not only in the language of man, but of his fellow creatures. Neruda finds company in his dog and his mongoose.

Mis únicas compañías fueron mi perro y mi mangosta. Ésta, recién salida de la selva, creció a mi lado, dormía en mi cama y comía en mi mesa. Nadie puede imaginarse la ternura de una mangosta. Mi pequeño animalito conocía cada minuto de mi existencia, se paseaba por mis papeles y corría detrás de mí todo el día. Se enrollaba entre mi hombro y mi cabeza a la hora de la siesta y dormía con el sueño sobresaltado y eléctrico de los animales salvajes. (129)

We must note here the simplicity of the language. The poetic and even

florid language that Neruda uses to describe more complex feelings or situations is missing in this episode. The poet seems to find a perfect correlation between simple language and the simple, but by no means less intense relationship between himself and the small animal. The episode also helps to recognize a certain tone that the poet means to communicate: humanity, simplicity and a certain humorous self-deprecation.

As Neruda tells us, his mongoose Kiria was somewhat famous in his neighborhood of Wellawatha, so that when a large snake appeared on one of its streets a group of small children came in search of the animal, which according to legend, could defeat these more powerful adversaries. As the battle is about to start Kiria realizes the strength of her opponent and decides to run, not stopping till she reaches Neruda's bedroom. And, says Neruda " Así perdí mi prestigio en el suburbio de Wellawatha hace ya más de treinta años." (130)

By adding "así" and "hace ya más de treinta años" Neruda is implying that though his work is often attacked by literary critics or by people who disagree with his ideologies, his reputation had already been damaged long ago by the action of his mongoose. Neruda tries to add humor to the passage but manages at the same time to "get back" at his detractors.

A touch of simplicity and humanness is added to the passage by the recollection of the loss of Kiria.

Pasó lo inevitable. Al volver al hotel y mirar a Brampy, su guardián me di cuenta de la tragedia. No le pregunté nada. Pero cuando me

senté en la veranda, ella no saltó sobre mis rodillas, ni pasó su peludísima cola por mi cabeza.

Puse un aviso en los diarios: "Mangosta perdida. Obedece al nombre de Kiria".

Nadie respondió. Ningún vecino la vio. Tal vez ya estaría muerta. Desapareció para siempre.

...A veces creía yo escuchar el chillido de Kiria que me llamaba desde un algún árbol nocturno. Encendía la luz, abría las ventanas y las puertas, escrutaba los cocoteros. No era ella. El mundo que Kiria conocía se había transformado en una gran estafa; su confianza se había desmoronado en la selva amenazante de la ciudad. Me sentí por mucho tiempo traspasado de melancolía.

(151)

All these details, mundane and seemingly unimportant, when placed in the autobiography acquire a new dimension. They help give humanity to the character, so that the transference of act into language creates a new landscape for the reader. It adds a new facet to the re-creation. It becomes an act that is easily understood and empathized with . It brings writer and reader into a closer relationship than was possible in many of the other situations.

The last episode that I shall treat is called " Un cordero en mi casa" and it illustrates Neruda's sensitivity, compassion, and his keen sense of humor. The language that Neruda uses is simple , as the poetry is left for more dramatic

episodes or re-creations.

"Un cordero en mi casa" is the story of sheep that is rescued from slaughter by the poet the night before it was to be slaughtered. "Mientras llegaba su destino," says Neruda "lo amarraron junto a mi ventana. Toda la noche gimió y lloró, baló y se quejó de su soledad. Partía el alma escuchar las modulaciones de aquel cordero. Al punto que decidí levantarme de madrugada y raptarlo."(309)

The humor is already evident in this last assertion, since we do not generally associate the word "rapto," or "kidnap," with an animal. The language has been taken down so that what is generally a tragic act, when related to a sheep becomes quite comical. Coupled with it, and to give it a more humorous tone, we find the figure of Juanito, an ignorant peasant who is totally unaware of the way things operate in the world outside of his village.

Un joven campesino experimentó tanto miedo que se subió a un tren sobre la marcha. El muchacho se llamaba Juanito, era muy católico y no sabía nada de las cosas de este mundo. Cuando pasó el colector del tren, revisando los pasajes, él respondió que no lo tenía, que se dirigía a Santiago, y que creía que los trenes eran para que la gente se subiera a ellos y viajara cuando lo necesitaba.

(310)

Neruda re-creates a scene and builds a social message into it. The attitude of Juanito is not only naive, but ultimately utopic. It expresses a belief that the poet holds, but cleverly transfers onto the re-created character.

The last part of the episode works in the same manner. In a humorous and self deprecatory manner Neruda incorporates what can only be interpreted as resentment at the manner in which he is treated in his own country.

Un transeúte le dijo, apiadado de su confusión, que debía dirigirse a mí, al poeta Pablo Neruda. No sé por qué le sugirieron esta idea. Probablemente porque en Chile se tiene por manía encargarme cuanta cosa peregrina le pasa por la cabeza a la gente, y a la vez echarme la culpa de todo cuanto ocurre. Son extañas costumbres nacionales. (311)

The most remarkable omission in the autobiography is the lack of information about Delia del Carril and Matilde Urrutia. Neruda informs his readers of his separation from one and union with the other as simply one more event that happened between 1952 and 1957. " Me separé definitivamente de Delia del Carril. Construí mi casa "La Chascona" y me trasladé a vivir en ella con Matilde Urrutia. (313). " says Neruda.. This is a remarkably brief statement when we consider that both women had such great influence in his life, and that much detail and poetry is dedicated to other women who were far less influential. I should remark, though, that Neruda is very aware of the omission. Neruda refers to it and explains to his reading public that the years between 1952 and 1957 will be omitted from the text because they have no "entertainment value."¹⁶ In this way, Neruda rationalizes not

¹⁶Since the autobiography is a revised and amplified edition of the articles that had appeared in *O Cruzeiro*, and since this revision was taking place in 1973 (361) we might also conjecture that the omission was a more deliberate one. He was by then married to Matilde Urrutia and giving

only the omission but he also states the purpose of the autobiography: to inform and entertain the reader. The autobiography therefore becomes an instrument that allows the interaction of writer and reader and has a very direct intent. It is a work of art and it has the mission to inform. The autobiography therefore becomes, like Neruda's poetry itself, a committed work of art.

In stark contrast to the scant information about Delia and Matilde, we find detailed information on such characters as Josie Bliss, a woman whom Neruda meets in Rangoon and who reappears in his life some time later. The inclusion of this episode in Neruda's autobiography can be explained by the fascination that the author holds for the unusual, by his need to explain and characterize his maleness¹¹⁷ and to include and emphasize the sense of loneliness that marked this period of his life. In this manner, the autobiography parallels the themes of the poetry written at this time.

detailed explanations about his marriage to Delia del Carril was probably not in his best interest. We must also remember that Delia del Carril was aware of Neruda's relationship with Matilde while they were married, and by not re-creating either relationships Neruda is saving himself and both women pain and embarrassment.

¹¹⁷ This point is an interesting contrast to Canetti who throughout much of his autobiography emphasizes his sexual inexperience. Neruda on the other hand, needs to point out that women and sexuality were an integral part of his experience. He acknowledges specific love affairs and very inconsequential physical encounters.

Tenía algunos escasos amigos en la calleja en que vivía. Amigas de varios colores pasaban por mi cama de campaña sin dejar más historia que el relámpago físico. Mi cuerpo era una hoguera solitaria encendida noche y día en aquella costa tropical. Mi amiga Patsy llegaba frecuentemente con algunas de sus compañeras, muchachas morenas y doradas, con sangre de boers, de ingleses, de dravidios. Se acostaban conmigo deportiva y desinteresadamente. (139-140)

Josie Bliss, though occupying only a short temporal segment in Neruda's life, was remarkable enough to have inspired, on her departure, one of Neruda's best known poems: "Tango del viudo."

Dejaba a Josie Bliss, especie de pantera birmana, con el más grande dolor. Apenas comenzó el barco a sacudirse en las olas del Golfo de Bengala, me puse a escribir el poema "Tango de viudo", trágico trozo de mi poesía destinado a la mujer que perdí y me perdió porque en su sangre crepitaba sin descanso el volcán de la cólera. Qué noche tan grande, qué tierra tan sola! (124-125)

There is an interesting contrast between Neruda's and Canetti's attitude towards women. I asserted that Canetti's writings were marked by his misogyny, and that most of the female characters that are re-created, and those created in his fictions, are generally imbued with negative personality traits. They are not liked by the author and therefore remain detached from him. The notable exceptions were his mother and Veza. Neruda, on the other hand, though not confessing much about his numerous, lengthier, and more stable relationships, is always anxious to re-create their sexual aspects. He therefore includes in his autobiography one episode that is notable since Neruda actually admits to a rape. Again, as we read the episode we must consider the context in which the event took place and the psychological background that brought it about.

The episode centers around the unromantic issue of an outhouse and the cleaning of a receptacle which Neruda discovers is done by a beautiful woman.

The beauty of the woman so impresses the poet that he becomes "preocupado, " or as should perhaps be assumed, "obsessed" by her presence:

Era tan bella que a pesar de su humilde oficio me dejó preocupado. Como si se tratara de un animal hurraño, llegado de la jungla, pertenecía a otra existencia, a un mundo separado. La llamé sin resultado. Después alguna vez le dejé en su camino algún regalo, seda o fruta. Ella pasaba sin oír ni mirar. Aquel trayecto miserable había sido convertido por su oscura belleza en la obligatoria ceremonia de una reina indiferente.

Una mañana decidido a todo, la tomé fuertemente de la muñeca y la miré cara a cara. No había idioma alguno en que pudiera hablarle. Se dejó conducir por mí sin una sonrisa y pronto estuvo desnuda sobre mi cama. Su delgadísima cintura, sus plenas caderas, las desbordantes copas de sus senos, la hacían igual a las milenarias esculturas del sur de la India. El encuentro fue el de un hombre con una estatua.

Permaneció todo el tiempo con sus ojos abiertos, impasible. Hacía bien en despreciarme. No se repitió la experiencia.(141)

The inclusion of this episode is obviously more shocking today than it was when the autobiography was written. It does give us though-- and in this we probably can find the historical value-- a sense of values and conduct that is interesting to consider. While today we have a heightened sense of what is

permissible or adequate behavior between the sexes, Neruda's revelations, and the inclusion of the episode in a self referential work shows a complete lack of sensitivity that is quite remarkable. For the reader the inclusion provides a fuller understanding of Neruda not only as a poet but as a man.

The Genesis of Some Poems and The Proustian Influence

Neruda considers the poet a chronicler of his time, and as such the autobiography becomes a re-creation of historical events as well as a documentation of his own poetic production. As an historical document Neruda is careful to include, as Canetti has done, detailed descriptions of the literary and artistic figures with whom he became acquainted and who influenced his life and work. The admiration he felt for García Lorca and the sadness that his assassination caused are carefully detailed in the autobiography. We also find episodes describing his friendship with Miguel Hernández, Rafael Alberti and the Mexican painters Orozco and Diego Rivera. The autobiography is also a political journal. It holds detailed descriptions of the political times, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War, and most importantly for Neruda the changing political landscape of Chile. Neruda's allegiance to Salvador Allende is well documented, as is the genesis of many of his works. The autobiography therefore functions as a chronicle of the time and of his work. Neruda frequently tries to pinpoint for the reader the genesis of certain poems, the circumstances that helped their creation and the

influences that worked on its creation.

Neruda says that his *Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada* are "el romance de Santiago, con las calles estudiantiles, la universidad y el olor a madreSelva del amor compartido."(75) He tells us that the poem "Tango del viudo" was inspired by his love affair and break up with Josie Bliss and that *Canto general* was a product of his political struggle and his adherence to the communist ideologies and party. (242-243) But by far the most remarkable "confession" is that César Frank's music was the greatest influence on *Residencia en la tierra*. "Los críticos" says Neruda " que tanto han escarmentado mis trabajos no han visto hasta ahora esta secreta influencia que aquí va confesada. Porque allí en Wellawatha escribí yo gran parte de *Residencia en la tierra*. Aunque mi poesía no es "olorosa ni aérea" sino tristemente terrenal, me parece que esos temas, tan repetidamente enlutados, tienen que ver con la intimidad retórica de aquella música que convivió conmigo. (139)

Neruda discovers music by way of Proust, who influences not only Neruda's writing but his musical education. In *Swann's Way*, Proust's narrator talks about the Vinteuil sonata as "aérea y olorosa" a description that Neruda finds not only exquisitely defines music , but is "una medida desesperada de la pasión" (137) It is in his quest to find the quality of this "poetic music" that he becomes acquainted with the music of Schubert, Wagner, Saint-Saëns, D'Indy and César Franck.

Proust is the only literary influence that Neruda directly acknowledges in

the autobiography, and in one re-creation the influence is quite notable. In the chapter called "La soledad luminosa" Neruda recalls that reading *Swann's Way* caused him to relive "los tormentos, los amores y los celos de mi adolescencia." (137) In other parts of the text Neruda re-creates episodes that began as a Proustian experience. The experience is originally recaptured much in the way Proust's narrator recaptures the experience of Combray: by the taste of a "petite madeleine." "No sé por qué," says Neruda, "entre mis viajes fantasiosos a Valparaíso, uno se me ha quedado grabado, impregnado por un aroma de hierbas arrancadas a la intimidad de los campos." (81) The difference here is that while the experience itself was triggered by an outside stimulus, we are presented the re-creation of the experience and not the original mode of apprehension. The autobiography removes the author from this direct experience and through the distance of time, it becomes a re-interpretation of the original experience. ¹¹⁸

In *Confieso que he vivido. Memorias* Neruda re-creates "las vidas del poeta, " the many lives," the many metamorphosis that the poet experienced during his life. The autobiography becomes an exercise in retrospection . It is Neruda's way of evaluating himself, his work and the changing world in which he lived. It is an intensive explication of text through the re-creation of a life. It is above all a

¹¹⁸The entire process can also be explained much in the way that Freud explains the process of association and memory. That is, perceptions, which remain as "memory-traces" in our unconscious mind and become memory, can surface through a process of association retaining a very slight sensory quality, though this quality is diminished when compared to the original perception. In this way, Neruda associates the smell of grass with the memory of his childhood home and a night spent at the cabin of a character named Novoa.
Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1965) 576-78.

text that tries to justify a poet's life, his destiny and his mission.

Conclusion

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breath, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

(Shakespeare, Sonnet 18.)

The premise of this thesis was to establish and differentiate two modes of self-reference and at the same time show the points in which these self-referential works converge and diverge in their problematics and representation. As I have chosen two such diverse personalities as Neruda and Canetti, there are immediate differences to be pointed out. Neruda's primary intention in writing the autobiography was to give his reading public an explication not only of his life but of his work. He re-creates what he calls "intermittent remembrances;" episodes which Neruda recaptures from memory not as a continuous stream of empirical events, but as episodes that survive in his consciousness to be brought forth and shaped by his poetic imagination. In this re-creation Neruda creates an image, a kind of self portrait in which artist and man are painted. Neruda is an author who, says Rodríguez Monegal, like Goethe "parece haber sufrido más de una metamorfosis en su ya larga carrera,"¹¹⁹ and these changes are noted and clarified in the autobiography as Neruda explains the impact that historical events had in his life and consequently in his poetry. The autobiography is therefore an important document that helps unravel the complexities of the poet as well as clarify his political and emotional life. The autobiography is what Monegal calls "una mirada retrospectiva"¹²⁰ which allows the poet to register "los cambios de piel, defin[ir]

¹¹⁹Emir Rodríguez Monegal, "Pablo Neruda: el Sistema del Poeta" in *Revista Iberoamericana*, vol XXXIX, Núms, 82-83 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh :1973) 41.

¹²⁰Monegal, p. 41.

sus crisis"¹²¹ as a way to find a definition of himself and his poetry. The autobiography functions primarily as an *ars poetica* interspersed with interpretive fragments of life.

Canetti's autobiography functions in the opposite manner. It is interpretive fragments of life interspersed with an explication of his work and of the artistic milieu of the times. Canetti's re-trospection is often also introspection as it functions as an instrument of self recognition and self examination as well as an exploration into his literary life. Because of the length of the work though, the different stages of exploration and definition appear distinctly and are represented in separate parts of the work. *Die gerettete Zunge* represents the most personal and introspective part of the autobiography as it explores Canetti's relationship with his mother, and it is mainly through her image that the picture of the son is revealed. Neruda defines himself only in relationship to his poetry while Canetti's self- recognition is expressed in relation to others: his mother, Karl Kraus, Veza.

While Canetti changes direction in *Die Fackel im Ohr* and *Das Augenspiel* where the re-creation is centered on the characters and we get a diluted view of the self, Neruda is constant in his representation. The focus is mainly on the poet and the world is interpreted through his narrow perceptive lens.

There are fundamental differences of character between these author's. Though contemporaries, and forced to live in a world of constant change through

¹²¹Monegal, p.41.

wars and upheaval, their approach to life and therefore the autobiography is quite marked. Neruda chooses an active political life, becoming involved in labor movements, joining the communist party and trying through his poetry to become the voice of his people. Canetti remains detached. His study of masses is clinical and his involvement with the subject of his studies is always distant. Though Canetti is forced to become a refugee his work never reflects the trauma or the struggle of his statelessness.

The autobiographies also reveal marked differences in their self-portrayals. Canetti displays what I have called an "hermetic narcissism," a high measure of self-involvement which, perhaps paradoxically, does not allow a personal approach. The reader is never allowed into the emotional aspects of life, and with the exception of his mother, he is left with little knowledge of the emotional bonds that were important to Canetti. The autobiography never re-creates the simpler side of emotions but deals with the complex or extraordinary. The individual characters that Canetti re-creates, receive the same treatment as his masses do: they are clinical subjects of study.

Neruda is approachable, and the text reveals this easy access to the audience. *Memorias* is filled with passages of high pathos and the reader always gets a sense of involvement. Neruda is an "actor" who through the autobiography tries to capture the movements and changes of his life. He never hides the activities that resulted in his work or in his actions. If anything, we can accuse Neruda of emotional exhibitionism.

There are points in which these authors and their autobiographies converge. The main and central issue is their common preoccupation with death. For Canetti death is the cause of all evil. It does not only bring with it total annihilation, but causes man to become evil. Man's only recourse therefore is to fight death, and he does so through art.

Neruda approaches the problem more subtly in the constant images of death that he uses in his poetry as well as his effort to re-create his life through the writing of the *Memorias*. For both authors the autobiography becomes the instrument to assuage their intense fear of annihilation, and serves to finally stem the pernicious influence of time. It is through language and in language that these authors find their immortality.

For the reader (or for this reader) the autobiographies are explanatory in nature. They make for an easier understanding of the authors, both of which are extremely complex and often hermetic. Canetti's work is not easy to read and less so to understand. His novel *Die Blendung*, as well as his plays and his books of aphorisms, all reveal a somewhat distant, coldly intellectual writer. In the autobiography Canetti tries to somewhat remove the distance between himself and the audience, and does so with limited success. Mainly though, the autobiography serves as a self-analytical tool, and as such it becomes the means the reader needs to attempt a reading of Canetti. We do gain a better understanding of Canetti's representation of the world and his quest for truth, through the autobiography.

Neruda's *Confieso que he vivo*. *Memorias* works somewhat in the same

manner. His poetry , which has often been called hermetic, becomes clearer through the reading of his memoirs, and so does the image of the poet. The man whose voice was raised to help his people, often reveals himself only as self-involved in the *Memorias*. The autobiography sheds lights on Neruda's life in a way his poetry can not. It is therefore an important supplement to his work.

Most importantly, though, the autobiographies represent two distinct interpretations of life, the different side of a coin that share a common center. They are verbal memorials of two men intent on finding unity and truth through art. The autobiographies represent a voyage through life by which the authors attain their ultimate goal: to refuse death.

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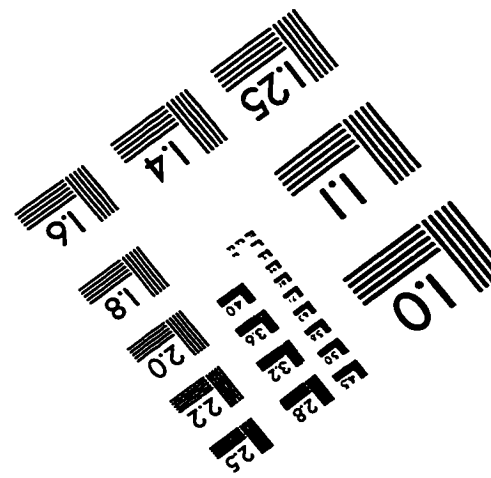
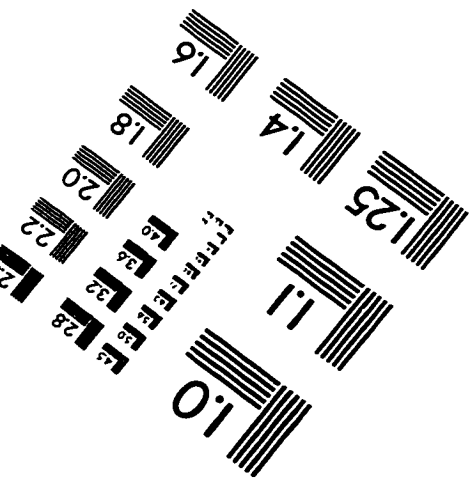
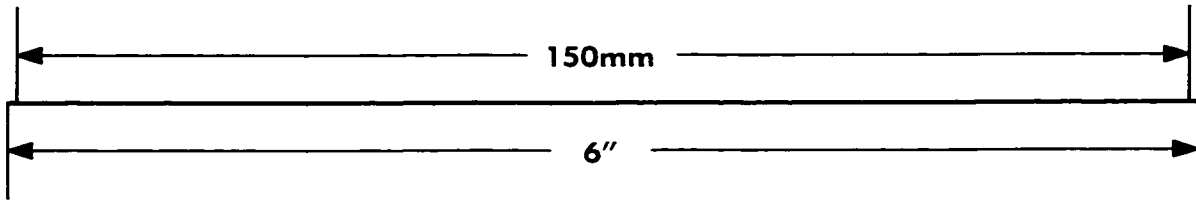
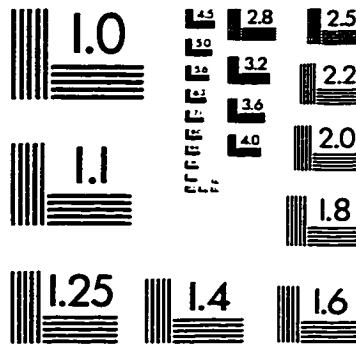
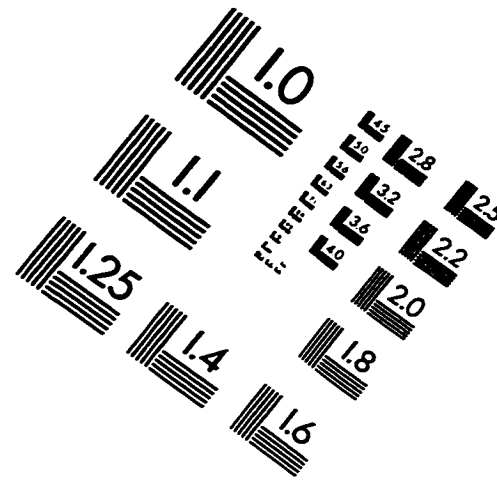
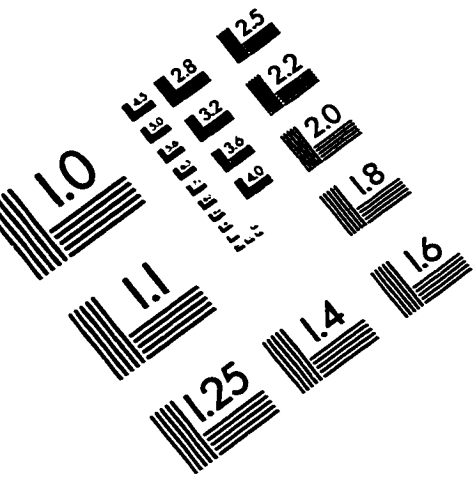
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