

**READING FOR (THE) REAL:
BETWEEN JACQUES LACAN AND NARRATIVE PLOT**

by

JUNGCHUN ROSLYN KO

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

2009

© 2009

JUNGCHUN ROSLYN KO

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

| | |
|-------|------------------------------|
| _____ | Anne Humpherys |
| Date | Chair of Examining Committee |
| _____ | Mario DiGangi |
| Date | Executive Officer |

Anne Humpherys

Gerhard Joseph

David Richter
Supervision Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

READING FOR (THE) REAL:

BETWEEN JACQUES LACAN AND NARRATIVE PLOT

by

Jungchun Roslyn Ko

Adviser: Professor Anne Humpherys

This dissertation uses Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to dialogue with narrative theory: it investigates, on the global level, the *raison d'être* of narrative and questions, in particular, the existing narratological framework wherein the workings of plot have been discussed and apprehended. Inspired by Peter Brooks' classic *Reading for the Plot* (1984), this dissertation continues to forge an interconnection between human psychical dynamics and literary textual dynamics. More, it aims at reopening such a discussion of plot apropos of narrative meaning, naming gaps therein, and proposing some possible alternative terms with which to further along narrative/plot studies.

In order to accomplish the abovementioned objectives, this dissertation brings in Lacanian theory and vocabulary to rethink, among all, the role of desire in narrative vis-à-vis that in the human subject—it argues in the first place that *narrative's desire is the desire of the human subject* (an extension of Lacan's famous dictum, *one's desire is the desire of the Other*). This formulation of an underpinning argument may sound too simple, but what the human subject desires remains an ever-perplexing one. Within the context of Lacanian theory, desire is never an independent term, being self-sufficient or unrelated to the other concepts. Rather, the Lacanian notion of desire points to a web of desire that revolves around such other locutions as (and placed here in random order):

the real, lack, anxiety, the pleasure principle, jouissance, the symbolic, the Other, objet petit a, mastery, limit, and freedom. Premised on the argument that narrative's desire is the desire of the human subject and on the compass of Lacanian desire, this dissertation investigates the workings of the web of desire in narrative.

Plot serves as the narrative agent that puts the web of desire—both in narrative and the human subject—in operation. Therewith posits this dissertation a way, a theory, to apprehend the psychological premise of narrative beginnings, the acting-out of narrative middles, and affective enjoyments embedded within narrative endings. Reading for the plot, this work concludes, is reading for more than pleasure. Reading for the plot is, rather, reading for the affective aesthetics of the human condition.

Acknowledgements

How do I thank thee? Let me count the ways. But words can fail when/where gratitude most abound.

I have always been fascinated—even to the degree of being spellbound—by those “Acknowledgements” (or such like) pages in books or texts, especially when I first receive them. Usually, after a browsing of front and back covers, and then tables of contents, I would go to those “Acknowledgements” pages and read them with relish.

I guess this interest and “reading habit” of mine (namely, going first from *paratexts* to *texts themselves*) are not totally irrelevant to my deep-seated enthusiasm and love for narrative and narratology, hence this dissertation project devoted to such studies. Often I find in those “Acknowledgements” pages some of the most interesting and very touching *para-narratives* (my own term again, and, this time, derived from Genette’s term *paratext[s]*).

Perhaps what draws me into those pages is precisely the *narrative* quality I find in “Acknowledgements” as *para-narratives*. They tell stories about the births of project ideas or “germs” (as Henry James did in the “Prefaces” to his fictional works, mainly his major novels). They also give (narrative) accounts of webs of support and love that help energize or propel the forward-going movement of their research/writing projects and subsequent emplotments. Those “Acknowledgements” acknowledge first and last the correlation, interactivity, if not also mutual dependence, between humanity and art: artistic creations (research/writing projects included) are created not only intertextually (referencing Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality) but also, if not more significantly, interpersonally and interactively. And the place where we give our acknowledgements is the place where we thank those who keep our research/writing desire and intellectual interest alive, always in motion and in view.

But how do I thank thee? Let me count yours ways . . .

I am utterly blessed with such a supportive, sagacious, knowledgeable, resourceful, and sharp-minded dissertation advisor and reader as Professor Anne Humpherys. She is a godsend to a doctoral student like me who, without repeated encouragement and support, would not have been able to go on to the end of my journey (and dissertation marathon). Her Graduate Center doctoral seminar course on narrative theory inspired this project of mine to come. And, most important of all, I thank her for having placed faith in me and in the worthiness of my work (for it, with the scope of its architectonics, daunted even me as its author and designer). Because of Professor Humpherys' faith in me and support of my work, I had all my freedom to pursue what I desire to achieve in and with this project. She has been one of the most significant motoring forces behind this work. I could not have done it without her.

I am equally blessed with Professor Gerhard Joseph, who not only read my work with enthusiasm and support but with a critical mind as well. My work benefited a lot from his challenging feedback and generous sharing of Lacanian knowledge and quotes. But, again, on top of all this, I thank him for having believed in me and my work. I could not possibly have wanted more from such a reader and mentor as him.

I wish to thank Professor David Richter here, again, for having agreed to join and serve on my dissertation committee at a later stage. My work has also benefited greatly from his challenging response and wise advice, not to mention his own contributions to the study of narratology which constitutes the field of my own dissertation work.

So with Professors Humpherys, Joseph, and Richter on my committee to guide and shepherd me, I have had all that a doctoral student would desire and need: critical minds, challenging readership, and, above all else, generous souls.

Also, I would like to thank Professors Steven Kruger, Joan Richardson, Mario DiGangi, and Ammiel Alcalay, together with all our past and present program assistants for having been there for us doctoral students and running the English department like a home where students can go for advice, assistance, and rest—for useful workshops of various kinds and status reminders and clearances, and the like.

Lastly, I am grateful for the financial aids, travel funds, fellowships, and teaching opportunities offered by both the English Departments and the Graduate Center of CUNY. With the Graduate Center's travel funds and its English Department's dissertation-year fellowship, I was able to attend conferences on national *and* international scales during my dissertation-writing years—conferences where I presented parts of my dissertation, met scholars both within and outside my own fields, and received constructive feedback, recognition and support of my work, and brainstorming intellectual exchanges on relevant fronts. Out of such encounters I have now small parts from this dissertation on program to be published in collections of essays. Lastly, with CUNY's teaching fellowships, I have been able to engage in stimulating classroom discussions of literature and writing with students, which in turn further enriched parts of my dissertation work.

Finally, where would I be without my family? Without my family's love and support throughout the years, I would not have had any beginnings, let alone endings, of this doctoral study and dissertation work. I am—in this life and next—indebted to a strong, beautiful, and intelligent mother (a story-lover herself), with whom I have always discussed narrative workings and shared our respective reader-responses. I am equally supported by the love of a sister who believes in my academic objectives and goals. In all this time they have given me and sustained the home I can forever return to. A home I can never do without.

And my father—such a father, without whom I would not have apprehended, *with jouissance*, Lacanian theory in relation to our human condition as memorized in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*—a father I could not have missed enough in all lives of mine.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter One: Introduction | |
| I. Narrative Studies: Past and Recent Developments | 2 |
| II. Narrative Plot and Choice of Lacanian Psychoanalytic Framework | 19 |
| III. This “narrative of narrative” | 47 |
| IV. Closing Remarks: Limitations and Future Possibilities | 58 |
| | |
| Chapter Two: The Genesis of Plot | |
| I. Freud and <i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i> | 66 |
| II. Lacan and Human Desire | 72 |
| III. Desire, Lack, and Narrative Beginning | 87 |
| IV. Propp and <i>Morphology of the Folktale</i> | 98 |
| V. The Act of Reading: Psychical Formation and (over-)Identification | 101 |
| VI. Greimas, the Actantial Model, and Conclusion | 126 |
| | |
| Chapter Three: The Discourses and Orientations of Plot | |
| I. Four Primary Discourses in Lacanian Theory | 141 |
| II. A Theory of Plot Discourses and Orientations | 167 |
| III. Narcissus without the Traversing of Fantasy | 174 |
| IV. A Divine Comedy of the Symbolic Jouissance | 177 |
| V. King Lear and King <i>Real</i> | 183 |
| VI. The <i>Alice</i> Books and the Dialectization of Desire | 195 |
| | |
| Chapter Four: There Is No Such Thing as a “Happy Ending” | |
| I. An Overview of Studies on Narrative Endings | 215 |
| II. Jouissance(s) and Narrative Ends | 226 |
| III. Freud and the Symbolic Jouissance | 240 |
| IV. Cixous and the Jouissance of the Other | 250 |
| V. Poe and the Imaginary Jouissance | 260 |
| | |
| Chapter Five: Epilogue | |
| I. A Transition of Jouissances in Narrative | 291 |
| II. Desire for Freedom to Desire | 299 |
| III. Today’s Narrative Imagination in Science Fantasy | 304 |
| | |
| Works Cited | 334 |

Chapter One: Introduction

Having marched into the 21st century, the century of advanced technology, digital information and literacy, we know we still cannot live without narrative. Indeed, humankind has not lost its desire of narrative and capacity for narrativity throughout its biological evolution and genetic transmission. Biologists and cognitive scientists have contended that the homo sapiens' ability and desire to construct narrative are hard-wired in the human brain; this ability and desire render human beings a *special* animal species and ensure survival, while narratives serve as meaning-making tools with which humankind carries on its creative and curiosity drives (or genes) and at the same time organizes its conceptual understanding of temporality and causality. In other words, we humans use narrative to comprehend the relation between the present and the past in order to predict or map out the future.

Even in this digital age we crave the same old human activity of narrating our individual life experience on the one hand and on the other the collective human condition—an activity which, in narratological terms, is understood as *narrativity*. Modern media and computer technologies, particularly the high-speed Internet with its various web agencies and social networks, have brought this interconnectivity among narrative, narrativity, and the human experience even closer to mind than perhaps ever expected. To a large degree, the high-tech of modern days has not only facilitated and meanwhile intensified our only-too-human desire to narrate (just take a look at the quantity of email narration we receive or send out *daily*), but it has also multiplied the avenues through which we narrate; it has opened up new possibilities and forms (with the aid of multimedia) for the ways in which we tell, create, embellish, and share our narratives. Besides email exchanges about our life events, new internet spaces are

created on a daily basis in forms of personal home pages and blogs for Internet users to share their stories and commune with one another across boundaries of almost all kinds. Plus, we become perhaps even more conscious than ever in human history of being needed as audience of someone else's narrativity. Despite our suspicion of, and sometimes distaste for, this tendency of having our lives over-narrativized by, for instance, news media or the Hollywood film industry, we, in truth, live in an age where the desire for narrativity comes before that which is narrated to and for us. Instead of exchanging physical tokens and material memorabilia, we exchange narratives and are aware of their surplus values *and enjoyments* in relation to human existence and encounters.

[1]

Narrative Studies: Past and Recent Developments

This project is a narratological study with an exclusive focus on narrative plot; in brief, how plot works and can be apprehended along Lacanian psychoanalytical lines. Together with character, voice, point of view, setting, theme, time, and the like, plot is a formal narrative element or constituent. Narratology (a term translated from French) or narrative studies began (but certainly do not end) with structural investigations based on or akin to scientific principles and methodologies into aforementioned formal narrative elements in literary texts; structuralist models are understood (and received) as studies of *grammars* of narrative elements as such. As the last century progressed, the field of narratology grew and was further enriched by post-structuralist studies of narrative which challenged older models and methods of narrative analysis. Introducing narratology at the end of the twentieth century, David Herman nicely summarized the growth and expansion of this field even prior to the advent of the twentieth-first century and argued that *narratology is not dead*:

Adapting a host of methodologies and perspectives—feminist, Bakhtinian, deconstructive, reader-response, psychoanalytic, historicist, rhetorical, film-theoretical, computational, discourse-analytic and (psycho) linguistic—narrative theory has undergone not a funeral but rather a sustained, sometimes startling metamorphosis since Rimmon-Kenan published her study [*Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* in 1983]. In the intervening years *narratology* has in fact ramified into *narratologies*; structuralist theorizing about stories has evolved into a plurality of models for narrative analysis. (*Narratologies* 1)

Indeed, born in the twentieth century, narrative studies have not only braved postmodern eras and their challenges, but kept on growing into this current century with a continued plurality of research interests and (cross-)disciplinary methodologies.

Prior to illuminating where this project stands within the spectrum of narrative theory and delving into its own approach and foci, I need first to orient my readers to what narrative studies are constituted of—some of their extant coverage and recent developments. I say “some” because it is not quite possible for me (neither is it my aim) to encompass *all* the narrative studies as well as narratological concepts and terms that have been published or brought into being, especially since the second half of the last century. I will engage only a number of them pertinent to my own introduction of narrative theory. Nevertheless, here I would like to suggest a couple of useful sources that can provide those readers interested in this field with more comprehensive information, glossaries, and/or references. For instance, both David H. Richter’s *Narrative/Theory* (1996) and Susana Onega and José Ángel García Landa’s *Narratology* (1996) have compiled excerpts of works most fundamental to narrative theory and introduced the rudimentary narrative vocabulary—ranging from structuralist models such as James Phelan’s on character (Richter), Gérard Genette’s on time and

narrative temporality (Richter; Onega and Landa have chosen Paul Ricœur's piece on the same narrative element instead), Mieke Bal's on focalization (Richter, Onega and Landa), Dorrit Cohn's on narrated monologue (Richter), Peter Rabinowitz's on audiences (Richter), Gerald Prince's on the narratee (Richter, Onega and Landa), Wayne Booth's on types of narration (Onega and Landa), A.-J. Greimas' on actantial models (Onega and Landa), Roland Barthes' on the third person in the novel, Barthes' on structural analysis of narrative (Onega and Landa), to post-structuralist models such as Peter Brooks' on plot (Richter, Onega and Landa), Henry Louis Gates' on the double-voiced narrative mode in African American literature (Richter), Rachel Blau DuPlessis' on feminist narratology at the level of the sentence (Richter), Teresa de Lauretis' on desire in narrative (Onega and Landa), Hayden White's on the value of narrativity (Onega and Landa), and others.

Furthermore, Gerald Prince's *Dictionary of Narratology* (first published in 1987 and revised in 2003) has quite an exhaustive compilation of existent narratological terms and quintessential concepts, unveiling at the same time the theorists' agreement and/or divergence concerning any subscribed narratological term. *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (2007), *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (2007), both edited by David Herman, and *A Companion to Narrative Theory* (2005) co-edited by James Phelan and Peter J. Rabinowitz all provide and bear witness to an international teamwork of scholars and theorists on defining grounding narratological terms and concepts as well as charting out the expanded (and still expanding) terrains of narrative theory. Lastly, H. Porter Abbott's *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (2002; revised in 2008) is a highly accessible read for anyone interested in narrative, narration, and narrativity. In addition to orienting his readers to the basic concepts of narrative theory, Abbot embraces other aspects of narrative (e.g., masterplots, paratexts, and closures),

together with narrative in relation to the act of reading (e.g., underreading, overreading, gaps, and cruxes) and three ways of interpretative practices (intentional, symptomatic, and adaptive readings). There is also a section on narrative and media (cinematic adaptations and narration), as in Herman's compiled essay collection which I will mention right below.

For a genealogy of narrative theory, its growth and transformation from structuralist to post-structuralist or postmodern times and narrative inquiries (including a transition in narrative media), readers may consult David Herman's introduction to his edited essay collection *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis* (1999). Besides a couple of post-structural approaches to classic narrative studies, this collection includes essays that tease out emerging methodologies at the end of the twentieth century, such as Marie-Laure Ryan's article on cybergeography narratology which bridges storytelling (e.g., narrative virtuality and recursivity) with computer technology and cyber culture, and Manfred Jahn's essay on artificial intelligence and cognitive narratology. For instance, Marie-Laure Ryan creatively uses the window metaphor in analyzing and categorizing the narrative structure of a given (narrative) text (and here I will refer to only two out of the seven types she has come up with): while in what Ryan terms as "one-window narratives, with occasional embedded windows," the narratives "follow the life of one central character, and avoid discontinuities by virtualizing the windows relating to the lives of other characters," those (again, what Ryan terms as) "narratives with many small windows" are stories that "[cut] up the lives of characters into many discontinuous but self-enclosed sketches focused on different times and places," and she lists Toni Morrison's *Beloved* as one such literary example (see Herman, 129-130). Marie-Laure Ryan's piece is used here to illustrate one of the new frontiers in narratological inquiry and one that brings technological models (and their vocabularies) into narrative studies.

For a critical study devoted to formal/structural vis-à-vis postmodern/post-structural literary theories and narratological inquiries, readers may consult Mark Currie's *Postmodern Narrative Theory* (1998). Currie rightly puts the conceptual paradigm shift in literary concerns in tandem with narrative studies:

The shift from [narrative textual] coherence to complexity was part of this [postmodern] broad departure from the view of narratives as stable structures. Most of the formal sciences of narrative were effectively sciences of unity and coherence. [...]. In the view of the poststructuralist critic, this was just a way of reducing the complexity or heterogeneity of a narrative: by suppressing textual details that contradicted the scheme, the traditional narratologist could present a partial reading of the text which saw it as a stable and coherent project. It was a key characteristic of poststructuralist narratology that it sought to sustain contradictory aspects of narrative, preserving their complexity and refusing the impulse to reduce the narrative to a stable meaning or coherent project. (3)

In his book Currie argues that “[d]iversification, deconstruction and politicisation then are the three characteristics of the transition in contemporary narratology” (6). Currie discusses how analyses and understanding of narratives (their textual worlds and workings) have moved away from being self-referential and rhetorical to socio-political and ideological. He uses “point of view” as an example and remarks that “[t]he change in emphasis occurs between the idea of fictional point of view as the manufacture of sympathy [e.g., Wayne Booth] and the idea of *interpellation* as the manufacture of identity [e.g., Louis Althusser]” [Italics original] (28). In other words, Currie traces and examines the shift from a “constative” to a “performative” narratology as one of his many incisive inquiries into the postmodern relation among narrative, culture, politics, and identity (or identity-formation).

Among the extant narrative studies and, in particular, guides to narrative theory, there is one I would like to draw our attention to. Wallace Martin's 1986 study of *Recent Theories of Narrative* is and will continue to remain, I believe, an enlightening resource for road-mapping one's initial engagement with the field of narrative studies; among all narratologists Martin was the one who really took on the question of *where narratology came from*. Consequently, I think the most significant contribution of Martin's book lies in the historico-literary transition he made clear from the theory of the novel to narrative theory. That is to say, narrative theory and studies grew out of the theory of the novel in the first place. It is, in fact, rather difficult to pinpoint, historically speaking, when the theory of the novel ended and when narrative theory came into view and took its stead. But according to Martin's argument, the 1960s signified a watershed for pushing the frontiers of emerging narrative theory and for the merging of, if not transition and differentiation between, the two. Martin argues that theories of the novel in the early twentieth century up to 1960 limited their investigation of fiction (or more broadly, narrative) exclusively to the genre of the novel, particularly novels of the realist tradition (as reflected in Northrop Frye's 1957 *Anatomy of Criticism*) and confined their critical attention to a realist check on plot and character developments; to social, historical, and moral issues engaged in novels, hand in hand with the aesthetic values and principles thereby produced or violated. For Martin, theories of the novel as such failed to account for non-realist literary and textual phenomena. While Martin does not discredit Frye's and Wayne Booth's contributions to the study of fiction, he does, again, see the 1960s as a significant decade in the development of narrative theory and remarks, "[t]wo factors are in large part responsible for the changes that occurred after 1960. First, narrative theory became an international subject of study, whereas in the preceding period critics had usually remained within the limits of their own literary and scholarly traditions. Second, it became an interdisciplinary subject" (*Recent Theories of Narrative* 23).

Martin points out the “interdisciplinary” concern and objective of French structuralism in the 1960s—that is, to render “the study of literature as a subdivision of the ‘sciences of man’ ” (Ibid.). Hence, the field of narrative studies began to witness combined—international *and* interdisciplinary—efforts in bringing narrative inquiries into dialogue starting with anthropological approaches (e.g., Claude Lévi-Strauss’s 1955 “The Structural Study of Myth”) and structural-linguistic methodologies (e.g., Roland Barthes’ 1966 “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” his 1970 *S/Z*, and A.-J. Greimas’ 1971 “Narrative Grammar: Units and Levels”). For more information on the early twentieth-century theories of the novel and the contributions of the 1960s French structuralism (and its respective models), readers may consult Martin’s introduction to his book.

No matter whether we agree that the 1960s indeed marked the watershed between the theory of the novel and narrative theory (for Russian formalism was already active between the 1910s and 1930s, with Russian folklorist Vladimir Propp having published his highly influential, though meanwhile controversial, *Morphology of the Folktale* in Russia in 1927), Martin does call our attention to the international and interdisciplinary engagements with the field of narrative studies along the trajectory of the last century. In the process the notion of “narrative” has changed: today in the twentieth-first century we (shall) understand that narrative no longer equals the novel and *only* the novel, albeit novels still remain, to this day, the most analyzed narrative form. While each theorist or narratologist defines what “narrative” is in his or her own terms, narrative is generally understood today as (any) text that contains at least the three following quintessential elements: events (or actions), sequence (or temporality), and causality (causes and effects of events or actions). Some narratologists maintain that a fourth qualification must be insisted upon while thinking of the term “narrative”—i.e., *narration*. (H. Porter

Abbott, however, calls our attention to those narratives that perform more “showing” than “telling” and notes in *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* that “[n]arrativity is a vexed issue, and as with many issues in the study of narrative there is no definitive test that can tell us to what degree narrativity is present.”) In any case, the field of narrative studies saw a developed divide between the chronological sequence of narrative (note: *not* narrated) events and the order (and manner) in which events are actually presented *or narrated*. Consequently, we have had the Russian Formalist terms “fabula” to describe the former and “syuzhet” the latter, and, correspondingly, the French structuralist (Gérard Genette’s) terms “histoire” and “récit” as well as (on the Anglo-English front) Seymour Chatman’s terms “story” and “discourse” for the same purpose. All such terms (and divides) highlight the implied yet distinct notion of narration in narrative. They also significantly divorce the concept of plot (which is one narrative element that constitutes “story,” “histoire,” and “fabula”) from narrative discourse (or “syuzhet” and “récit”).¹

With a formal divide as such (again, between plot/story and discourse), theorists found new foci of their narrative inquiries (the study of narrative discourse is, as research and publication data show, preferred over that of story and its formal elements per se, especially as a response to early structuralist models on story or fabula). They created new vocabulary (as, according to Martin, theorists of the novel had failed to achieve) with which to examine the intricate textual phenomena of *narration* in non-realist texts such as stream-of-consciousness narratives. This attention to narration in narrative birthed, among many, Mieke Bal’s 1985 study, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, in which the Dutch theorist distinguishes what she calls

¹ I am only roughly grouping “plot” and “story” together here (but certainly do not wish to conflate the two) because my current emphasis is on the narratological divide between story (plot included) and discourse. A brief discussion of divergent narratological definitions of “plot” in relation to “story,” “fabula,” and “syuzhet” can be found in the following section of this chapter.

“focalization” and “focalizer” from our traditional understanding of “point of view” and “the narrator.” Bal argues that the conventional vocabulary such as “point of view” and “narrative perspective” is unclear and problematic in that such existent terms “do not make an explicit distinction between, on the one hand, the vision through which the elements are presented and, on the other, the identity of the voice that is verbalizing that vision. To put it more simply: they do not make a distinction between *those who see* and *those who speak*” [Italics original] (143). To put it crudely here, what Bal calls “focalization” is “the relation between the vision and that which is ‘seen,’ perceived” (142), and “focalizers” refer to *those who see*, as apart from “narrators” (*those who speak*) in narratives. A given narrator may not speak about or narrate what s/he sees but what a “character-bound focalizer” (again, Bal’s term) sees, thinks, and feels. Bal’s study on focalization and focalizer(s) has gained currency within the field of narrative studies and can serve here as a telling example of what *narrative theory* encompasses as well as its own richness and complexity. Other equally seminal (and widely anthologized) works in the field that foreground the importance of narration or methods of discourse in narrative are: Gérard Genette’s 1972 *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, a study of Marcel Proust’s works with a particular emphasis on time; Austrian-origin theorist Dorrit Cohn’s 1978 *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction* on what she terms as narrated monologues and psycho-narration; and Egyptian-origin narratologist Gerald Prince’s 1973 “Introduction to the Study of the Narratee.”

A narratee is one to whom a given narrator delivers or addresses his or her narration. For instance, in *Wuthering Heights*, Mr. Lockwood is the narratee for whom Nelly Dean narrates the story of Catherine Earnshaw, Edgar Linton, and Heathcliff. In *Frankenstein*, Mrs. Saville, the sister of Captain Robert Walton, is the narratee who receives her

brother's epistolary narration of his North Pole expedition and later the story about Victor Frankenstein and the Monster. Gerald Prince's model of the narratee not only points to the emphasis of narration (apropos of its embedded recipient) in the concept of narrative, but it also belongs with those post-1960s studies in the field on the communication model in narrative. With Prince's study on the narratee and Wolfgang Iser's 1978 work on the implied reader, the narrative communication model as first proposed by Wayne Booth is now rather complete and looks like the following (of course, Bal's "focalizer" can or should, in fact, also be included in this model):

Author-> Implied Author-> Narrator-> Text <-Narratee <-Implied Reader <- Reader

This narrative community within which narrative communications take place (on multiple levels as above illustrated) would look even more enlarged and complicated if one takes into further account Peter J. Rabinowitz's model of audiences.² All in all, what can be said here is: while theories of the novel engage perhaps at best a triadic relationship among author, text, and reader, narrative theory has developed into multi-layered inquiries into narrative workings and pushed narrative communities into expansion, which includes investigations of the relationship between narrative and readers/audiences (note the pluralities of the terms, "readers" and "audiences," showing

² In his article "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," first published in the journal *Critical Inquiry* (1977) and anthologized in, for instance, David Richter's edited *Narrative/Theory* (1996), Rabinowitz argues that there are "at least four audiences implied in any narrative literary text." According to his designations, they are: 1) the *actual audience* (akin to what Gerald Prince calls *the real reader*), which "consists of the flesh-and-blood people who read the book"; 2) the *authorial audience* (akin to what Prince calls *the virtual reader*), which refers to a satisfactory readership—with competent literacy, knowledge, and comprehension—that the implied author has in mind or relies on when composing his/her text and constructing its meaning or message(s); 3) the *narrative audience*, which receives the narrator's narration and understands, again with competence yet at the same with a conscious suspension of disbelief, the hypothetical situations of narrative or fictional worlds; 4) the *ideal narrative audience* (akin to what Prince calls *the ideal reader*), which believes particularly an unreliable narrator and "accepts his judgments, sympathizes with his plight, laughs at his jokes even when they are bad." Despite the similarities between Prince's and Rabinowitz's conceptualizations of readers and audiences, Prince's ideas of *the narratee* and *the zero-degree narratee* remain uniquely his own. For a more subtle understanding of Prince's and Rabinowitz's terms, readers should consult their own works.

that such concepts in narrative theory are no longer vaguely generic or one-dimensionally comprehensive).

Narrative studies have become much more localized *and* globalized than theories of the novel in delving into narrative workings and the boundaries of narrative worlds, together with the relation between narrative and human meaning-making. In the 1970s and 1980s, the field of narrative studies experienced, on the one hand, a shift in focus from formalist/structuralist approaches to postmodern and more interdisciplinary undertakings (such as feminist narratology, visual narratology, psychoanalysis and narrative, cultural studies and narrative) and, on the other hand, an exponential growth especially along the lines of reader-response criticism and theories on the act of reading. Indeed, after Roland Barthes claimed the death of the author in *Image-Music-Text* (1977), construction work on the narrative meaning of a given text traversed from the plane of authorial intention, design, and control to that of readerly reconstruction of textual information and meaning. In *S/Z* (first published in French in 1970), Barthes already claimed that “the goal of literary work (of literature as work) is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of text” (4). Accordingly, a branch of narrative theory had significantly expanded the spectrum of narrative communication by exploring the roles and types of the reader/audience and looked into the process of reading and the reader’s cognitive or other interpretative practices (hence again, readers as “producers” of texts). On these subjects, readers may consult the classic 1980 essay collection *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* edited by Jane P. Tompkins, hand in hand with works by individual narrative theorists such as Wolfgang Iser, Peter Rabinowitz, Umberto Eco, Walker Gibson, and James Phelan. For an engagement of psychoanalysis in conjunction with reader-response criticism, readers

may refer to Norman Holland's books (some of which will be mentioned and discussed in the next chapter).

As a result, even the meaning and extent of *narrativity* have been reshaped and redefined: the reader/audience is now embedded within such a notion and operates interactively with the other dimensions of narrative activities. James Phelan says it well in the introduction of his 2007 book *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*: “[f]rom this perspective, narrativity is a double-layered phenomenon, involving both a dynamics of character, event, and telling and a dynamics of audience response” (7). Phelan further argues that the first (textual) dynamics—with its internal instabilities or conflicts as in unreliable narration, for instance—would impact the latter (the dynamics of audience response), calling for the reader's observations and what Phelan terms as “interpretive,” “aesthetic,” and/or “ethical” judgments (of characters, events, the narrator, the implied author, etc.). Readerly or, again what Phelan calls, “narrative judgments” as such would in turn confer meaning and even (interpretive, aesthetic, and/or ethical) value(s) upon narrative(s).³ Such would be the scope and feedback loop of present-day narrativity, with emphasis added upon the operative role of the reader/audience. I myself am also interested in this reader-response branch within narrative theory, but I am in this project particularly

³ I am here giving only a nutshell of Phelan's own, more sophisticated and fleshed-out, thesis on the formations and interconnectedness of the three types of “narrative judgment” he has proposed in *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*. Here is an example of Phelan's original thesis, which also provides basic definitions for the three kinds of narrative judgment (so I quote it here in its entirety): “*Thesis two: readers make three main types of narrative judgment, each of which has the potential to overlap with or affect the other two: interpretive judgments about the nature of actions or other elements of the narrative, ethical judgments about the moral value of characters and actions, and aesthetic judgments about the artistic quality of the narrative and of its parts.* This thesis has two corollaries: Corollary 1: a single action may evoke multiple kinds of judgment. Corollary 2: because characters' actions include their judgments, readers often judge characters' judgments” [Italics original] (9). For a more complete discussion of all seven theses regarding narrative judgment, refer to Phelan's book, particularly the introduction (which contains a lot more than narrative judgments).

concerned with the relation between the act of reading and (formations of) readerly identification—and I am curious about the workings of such a relation on the *psychical*, rather than on the rhetorical, cognitive or any other, level (despite the recent development in narrative studies of bringing reader-response criticism and cognitive science together). With this said, I attempt at postulating in Chapter 2 three modes of reading and their corresponding readerly identification and situate them all on the psychical plane.

As afore-mentioned, in the trajectory of the development of narrative theory, the notion of “narrative” itself has significantly changed. Although in 1985 Mieke Bal already defined a *narrative* text as “a text in which an agent relates (‘tells’) a story in a particular medium, such as language, imagery, sound buildings, or a combination thereof” (5), narratologists have still, to this day, kept challenging the borders of the genre of narrative and rethinking what can be or ought to be considered as “narrative.” Not only have cinematic narratives (and cinematic narrative discourses) been brought into this field and established their legitimacy, but comics and the graphic novel, too, have been pronounced as a promising rich subfield, not to mention computerized narratives (and even computerized game narratives) or those made possible by other kinds of media. In truth, technology and science—particularly computer and cognitive sciences—have placed their holds and bids on narrative inquiries and carried their practices into the 21st century. All these developments testify to the international and interdisciplinary nature, if not also objective, of narrative theory. While for Lukács, Bakhtin, and their times it was the genre of the novel that was in the making, now we can say the same about narrative. The genre of narrative is *in the making*, and so are narrative studies. To embrace and continue dispersing this changed notion of narrative beyond the novel, I have included in this project a discussion of the Shakespearean play

of *King Lear*, a number of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories, Sigmund Freud's and Hélène Cixous' theoretical texts as well as a couple of science fiction films *as narratives*. What I remain unable to encompass is a discussion of poetry—not just narrative but lyrical poetry, too—as narrative (except a small paragraph on Lord Alfred Tennyson's *In Memoriam* in the epilogue). Fortunately, the phenomenon of this insufficiency (discussion of lyrical poetry as narrative) has been recently paid attention to and is currently urged and expected by narratologists in the field to be addressed and more fully examined.

Besides a changed or ever-changing notion of what narrative is, what narrative *does*, or the purpose of (reading) narrative, has been examined and developed into many a theory. According to Abbot, for instance, “the question remains: what does narrative do for us? And the first answer is that it does many things for us [...]. But if we had to choose one answer above all others, the likeliest is that *narrative is the principle way in which our species organize its understanding of time*” [Italics original] (3). On a similar front, Frank Kermode posits that we read narratives because “there is still a need to speak humanly of a life's importance in relation to it [a world that seems eternal]—a need in the moment of existence to belong, to be related to a beginning and to an end” (4). As he puts it, “[m]en, like poets, rush ‘into the midst,’ *in medias res*, when they are born; they also die *in mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems” (7). Narratives, according to Kermode, enable us to grapple with our “apocalypse-crisis” (9) in terms of both the (immanent) ending of our individual human life and that of a decade, an age, or even a millennium. Causality and temporality are thus interlaced in Kermode's conceptualization of the *raison d'être* of (reading) narrative. Using a different approach to the interconnectedness between causality and temporality, Emma Kafalenos

maps their interrelation onto the level of what she calls “functions” in narrative. In her book *Narrative Causalities* (2006), Kafalenos follows in the footsteps of Tzvetan Todorov and Vladimir Propp and proposes her own model of “function analysis,” which comprises ten (sequential) functions of narrative events/actions according to the order in which they are narrated. Overall, Kafalenos argues that the sequential representation of narrative events/actions enables the reader (viewer, listener) to grasp their causal relations and thereby make sense of the information imparted by a given narrative. This cognitive processing and understanding of narrative workings can benefit the reader’s (viewer’s, listener’s) comprehension of real-life actions, events, and the information they carry with them. In Kafalenos’ own words, “[u]nderstanding fabula as a construct that readers (listeners, viewers) make opens the possibility of comparing how we create causal sequences in response to a narrative, to how we create causal sequences in response to events we learn about in our world” (130).

On other fronts, we have Mieke Bal who contends that “narrative is a cultural attitude,” and, accordingly as she argues, “narratology is “a perspective on culture,” and narratives (as well as narratology) function as cultural analyses (222); Ross Chamber who proposes that narrative exerts a power to “charm” over the reader and “seduces” him or her into its “situation” which entails “social agreements, implicit pacts or contracts, in order to produce exchanges,” or, in other words, to effect ideological changes in social communication; Patrick O’Neill who suggests that “[t]here is clearly a sense in which all narratives are a form of semiotic game” and that, in inventing and reading narratives, the author and the reader are engaged in playing games and meanwhile “enjoying certain freedoms and subject to certain constraints as regards to particular ‘moves’ ” (26-27). In *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology* (1996), James Phelan reads beyond the rhetorical dimension in narrative: “narrative is not just story but also action, *the telling of a story by someone to someone on some occasion for some purpose*”

[Italics original] (8). Reading narrative as rhetoric (rhetorical action) allows us to understand, both in fictive and real-life situations, how “knowledge, feelings, values, and beliefs” are constructed, mediated, transmitted, and processed through rhetorical construction (and even deconstruction). “Rhetoric” is then Phelan’s “shorthand term” for describing the multi-layered relationship among author, text, and audience comprised of *interaction*, *exchange*, *transaction*, and *intercourse* (18). Phelan further points out that “[e]ntering the authorial audience allows us to recognize the ethical and ideological bases of the author’s invitations. Comparing those values to the ones we bring to the text leads us into a dialogue about those values” (100). Having our readerly values and judgments thus reshaped or dialectized would be the rhetorical function of narrative—on the ethical level.

Last but not least, theorists who are interested in the intersection between art and bio-evolutionary science have also joined the forum and prompted further discussions of what art (narrative included) does to (ensure) the survival of the human species. For example, in her article “‘Making Special’: An Undescribed Human Universal and the Core of a Behavior of Art,” Ellen Dissanayake argues that “all art is an instance of making special” and that, contrary to what has been generally assumed or believed, making the homo sapiens special (different from other animal species) through art is a “primary,” not secondary, human behavior (see Cooke and Turner, 28-46). Likewise, Eric S. Rabkin states in his essay “Imagination and Survival: The Case of Fantastic Literature” that “imagination [in the form of storytelling, for instance] does, after all, have some direct survival value”; and, in “The ‘Novel’ Novel: A Sociobiological Analysis of the Novelty Drive As Expressed in Science Fiction,” Joseph D. Miller emphasizes humankind’s curiosity (or what he calls “novelty”) drive, which uses science fiction/film for its

expression and continuance (see Cooke and Turner's essay collection *Biopoetics* for more).

Besides bio-evolutionary science, other sciences have ventured their takes on what narrative does to/for us readers (or why we read narratives). Lisa Zunshine's 2006 publication *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel* exemplifies the recent cognitive approach to the act of reading and interpreting literature. Based on cognitive psychology, anthropology, and philosophy of the Theory of Mind (aka ToM), Zunshine argues that, when reading fiction, "we engage in our own constant construction of the possible states of mind of the people we encounter" (24). Fiction-reading is also "mind-reading," and, according to Zunshine, we as readers *and humans* enjoy partaking in such a mental challenge. She further explains:

I can say that by imagining the hidden mental states of fictional characters, by following the readily available representations of such states throughout the narrative, and by comparing our interpretation of what the given character must be feeling at a given moment with what we assume could be the author's own interpretation, we deliver a rich stimulation to the cognitive adaptations constituting our Theory of Mind. Many of us come to enjoy such stimulation and need it as a steady supplement to our daily social interactions. (24-25)

Zunshine adds that even the act of misinterpretation "does not detract from the cognitive satisfaction allowed by the reading of fiction" (25). Seen in this light, fiction-reading as mind-reading enables us humans to develop our understanding and sharpen our interpretation of real people's mental processes, cognitive behaviors, and (levels or embedment) of intentionalities.⁴

⁴ Part II in Zunshine's book engages the concept of "metarepresentation"; in short, "a representation of a representation" (see, for instance, p. 47). Zunshine uses this concept to explore intentionality in narrative (e.g., the characters', the narrator's, and the implied author's).

No matter how each pronouncement on *what narrative does* departs from the others, almost all theorists and narratologists would agree that narrative, together with narrativity, has been and will remain an essential tool for humankind's meaning-making—of time (or temporality), causality, life and death or apocalyptic-crises, socio-cultural relations and negotiations, identity- and value-formations, linguistic or rhetorical communications, cognitive learning, or even of the survival of the homo sapiens as a special species. In this project I, too, take part in such a grounding narratological investigation and argue that narrative allows us to touch base with and negotiate our human psychological desire. Narrative causes, sustains, and even reconfigures desire as such. The underlying question of *what human subjects desire* will be addressed first in the later part of this introduction (especially section iii) and at greater length in the subsequent chapters.

[II]

Narrative Plot and Choice of Lacanian Psychoanalytic Framework:

Why Plot and Why Lacan?

As stated earlier, my own narratological project is a study of narrative plot through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory. I remember at one academic conference I attended in the recent past a fellow conferee was puzzled upon first hearing the subject of my paper (and doctoral study) and shyly asked: *do people still talk about plot?* Indeed, who still talks or even cares about plot nowadays? Not high-brow academics, and definitely not post-modern scholars and theorists. It seems and is quite a fact as well that even the field of narratology, dedicated to the study of narrative, has long moved

She further argues that our in-built “source-monitoring” mental capacity allows us to track the minds we read (both in fiction and in real life). This capacity alerts the reader to “metarepresentation.” In Part III of the book, Zunshine uses the genre of detective fiction to propose that the reader gains pleasure from reading detective stories because such reading whets the reader’s “source-monitoring” capacity. For more details, consult Zunshine’s book.

away and beyond analyzing and theorizing about plot, if the latter has not already been entirely abandoned or easily dismissed as an antiquated or jaded subject of (narrative and literary) study. Peter Brooks brilliantly puts the high- and low-brow impressions of, if not also biases about, plot: “‘[r]eading for the plot,’ we learned somewhere in the course of our schooling, is a low form of activity. [...]. Plot has been disdained as the element of narrative that least sets off and defines high art—indeed, plot is that which especially characterizes popular mass-consumption literature: plot is why we read *Jaws*, but not Henry James” (4).

But I am afraid that the populace of the twentieth-first century, too, has grown no less suspicious of new or future possibilities of plot designs as well as designs (intentions) in plot. One of the “faults” we may find with structural analyses of plot (e.g., Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* and even going as far back as to Aristotle’s *Poetics*) is that they render both (again, plot designs and designs in plot) too predictable, hence exhaustible and, as one would like to imagine or argue, pretty exhausted by now albeit we are still at an early stage of this new millennium. Plots have given way to or yielded masterplots that could almost rival the former in number and in “types.” Hollywood production of cinematic narratives, for instance, certainly does not help de-populate the public mind with cultural masterplots. My own college literature-teaching experience has informed me of how this suspicion concerning the death of (new) plot(s) on the part of students can even *retroactively* act on their reading experience and ensuing interpretation of literary works. Its danger lies in that students (under)read such classic texts as Jane Austen’s and Charles Dickens’ novels along the masterplot lines of fairy tales and/or stories that tell the protagonists’ journeys from rags to riches, and nothing else (or more). To boot, one may suspect that even those plots which aim at subverting (politico-social, cultural, linguistic, or other such like) masterplots have meanwhile

developed masterplots of their own, i.e., masterplots of subversion. In this light, closure at narrative ends, for instance, becomes quite a norm for a given “type” of narrative masterplots *as does* anti-closure—originally an effort of breaking out of traditional closure—for another given “type” (of masterplots). So the questions remain: why do I choose to devote this project to narrative plot? What else or what more can I say about plot? Is the (narratological) discourse or theorization about plot *dead*? To best address these questions and explain where my own project came from, I believe that now we need to apprehend the overall trajectory of the extant discussion of plot.

Exemplary extant studies and discussions of plot (with their respective foci, coverage, and theoretical orientations, of course) range from Aristotle’s *Poetics* (ca. 335 B.C.), to Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale* (first published in Russian in 1927 and translated into English thirty years later), E. M. Forster’s *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), R. S. Crane’s article “The Concept of Plot and the Plot of *Tom Jones* (1950), Northrop Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), A.-J. Greimas’ *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method* (first published as *Sémantique structurale: Recherche de méthode* in 1966 and translated into English in 1983), Claude Bremond’s “The Logic of Narrative Possibilities” (first published as “La logique des possibles narratifs” in *Communications* 8 in 1966), Roland Barthes’ “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives” (first published as “Introduction à l’analyse structurale du récit” in *Communications* 8 in 1966 and in the 1977 English edition entitled *Image, Music, Text*), Barthes’ *S/Z* (published in French in 1970 and in English in 1974), Tzvetan Todorov’s *Poétique de la prose* (first published in French in 1971 and translated into English in 1977), Seymour Chatman’s *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978), Paul Ricoeur’s chapter “The Metamorphoses of the Plot” in the second volume of *Time and Narrative* (first published in French in 1984 and translated into English in 1985), and to Peter Brooks’ *Reading for*

the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative (1984), James Phelan's *Reading People, Reading Plots: Character, Progression, and the Interpretation of Narrative* (1989), Emma Kafalenos' *Narrative Causalities* (2006). A discussion of the majority of the above-listed models or studies on plot—their continuities, transitions, and departures—can be found in Peter Brooks' opening chapter in *Reading for the Plot*. Given Brooks' rather comprehensive introduction to the major plot studies (especially those published prior to the 1990s), I will engage only a selected few below apropos of my own discursive focus.

While each of the above-mentioned models renders its own definition of plot, as well as those components most significant to the configurations of plot(s), almost all begin with (while some further challenge) the assumption that, *on the level of form*, plot relates to or concerns the structure/structuration of events/actions in a given narrative text. Aristotle, for instance, famously gives primacy to plot (*mythos*) in dramatic narratives and defines plot as “the imitation of the action (by ‘plot’ here I [Aristotle] mean the organization of events)” (11). He argues that, whereas comedy is “an imitation of inferior people” (9), tragedy “is not an imitation of persons, but of actions and of life. Well-being and ill-being reside in action, and the goal of life is an activity, not a quality” and concludes that “the events, i.e. the plot, are what tragedy is there for, and that is the most important thing of all” (11). For Aristotle, a good plot should meet the criteria of “completeness,” “magnitude,” “unity,” “universality,” and a “determinate structure.” Furthermore, not only does plot in his theory of poetics define generic differences, but character, too, cannot be divorced from plot as an independent, self-sustained existent. A character's “goodness” depends on the good choice s/he makes or the good action s/he takes in a given plot. Accordingly, a good cathartic tragedy reflects or *imitates* “people better than we are” in a plot that entails the suffering, destiny-reversal, and recognition

of such characters. Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* runs along a similar line (of mimesis): types of (this time, fictional) characters coexist with types of actions and structurations of events in plots. As Frye notes, "[f]ictions, therefore, may be classified, not morally, but by the hero's power of action, which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same" (33). We see a continued framing of the correlation between character and plot (i.e., a meaningful string of actions and events) in Vladimir Propp's 1927 study of the specific genre of Russian folktales (or "wondertales"). Propp sorts Russian wondertale character types into seven "dramatis personae"—the hero, the princess (or sought-for person), the villain, the donor, the helper, the dispatcher, and the false hero—all of which are defined by their respective "spheres of action."⁵ A complete wondertale plot then constitutes an interplay among the dramatis personae in thirty-one "functions," ranging from what Propp calls "absentation," "interdiction," "villainy," "lack" to "mediation," "departure," "provision or receipt of a magical agent," "victory," "return," etc.⁶ With or without an emphasis on mimesis and fictionality, such models use plot structures and structurations as defining modes of literary genres and treat characters (or dramatis personae) as a constituent element of plot—let alone aesthetically hierarchizing and morally (red-)flagging them (literary genres or characters or both). In short, plot is here defined by and organized around actions.

The rise of the modern novel, in tandem with its criticism, saw a reverse turn of this earlier subordination of character to plot. Seeing that the critics, if not the modern authors themselves as well, have privileged character instead and "tended to reduce plot

⁵ For Propp's own (and more complete) introduction of the seven dramatis personae, together with their respective "spheres of action," see the sixth chapter on "The Distribution of Functions among Dramatis Personae" in his *Morphology of the Folktale*.

⁶ See a complete catalogue of the thirty-one functions of the seven dramatis personae in the third chapter, "The Functions of Dramatis Personae," in *Morphology of the Folktale*. Some of the above-named dramatis personae, their "functions," and their "spheres of action" will be looked into and in fact feature an important part of my own narratological argument in Chapter 2.

to action alone,” the founder of the Chicago school of Literary Criticism R. S. Crane urges an expanded notion of plot in his 1950 article on plot in general and, in particular, the plot of *Tom Jones*. According to Crane, three aspects ought to be added in our consideration and evaluation of “plot”—in other words, there should be a suturing of character and plot, *without any privileging*, in our overall analysis and apprehension of a given narrative:

In stating this principle for any plot, we must consider three things: (1) the general estimate we are induced to form, by signs in the work, of the moral character and deserts of the hero, as a result of which we tend, more or less ardently, to wish for him either good or bad fortune in the end; (2) the judgments we are led similarly to make about the nature of the events that actually befall the hero or seem likely to befall him, as having either painful or pleasurable consequences for him, and this in greater or less degree and permanently or temporarily; and (3) the opinions we are made to entertain concerning the degree and kind of his responsibility for what happens to him as being either little or great and, if the latter, the result either of his acting in full knowledge of what he is doing or of some sort of mistake. The form of a given plot is a function of the particular correlation among these three variables which the completed work is calculated to establish, consistently and progressively, in our minds [...]. (78)

In Crane’s understanding, there should no longer be any divide and, moreover, hierarchy between character and plot. Rather, plot is concerned with the protagonist’s “change.” Hence, Crane posits three types of narrative plots—*plots of action*, *plots of character*, and *plots of thought*—in characterizing, respectively, the protagonist’s change of situation, the change of the protagonist’s moral character, and the change of the protagonist’s thought (or thought process). All the three types of plots require (or embed)

action of some sort to initiate, more importantly, the protagonist's change, so, once again, plot should not be reduced to action alone.

On the French front, Paul Ricœur similarly remarks in his 1984 study of narrative: “in the modern novel we see the notion of character overtake that of plot, becoming equal with it, then finally surpass it entirely” (9). He further summarizes that the expansion of character in narrative can be seen in the English novel of the eighteenth century, in *Bildungsromans*, and in the stream-of-consciousness novel. In his way, Ricœur enriches Crane's 1950 insight advancing that, in view of such literary developments *as well as* the mimetic tradition (action imitates life) since Aristotle, the notion of plot (and emplotment) should also be expanded to embrace not only the “external” or “visible” changes of protagonists' actions, fortunes, and moral transformations, but also those “purely internal changes affecting the temporal course of sensations and emotions, moving ultimately to the least organized, least conscious level introspection can reach” (10). Together, Crane's and Ricœur's calls for an expanded concept of plot bespeak an effort and indeed an enriching plausibility to accommodate the rise of character, along with its stream of impressions and consciousness, in the modern novel (or modern narratives in general).

Now let me backtrack a little and return to Vladimir Propp as a prime example (so it has been regarded) of the Russian Formalist approach to the study of narrative and narrative language which inspired the French structuralist studies in the 1960s and the early 1970s. As first and foremost a folklorist, Propp saw the insufficiencies of the works done on the folktale in his time—those works were, at most, collections of such tales. He then set out to study a selection of the Russian wondertale (one hundred in total) and analyze the narrative structure of his material in hopes of apprehending the significant

compositional motifs, moves, and functions that keep reoccurring in the wondertale. Indeed, repetition in form unveils that which is significant and ought to be taken into consideration in content. (As mentioned earlier, Propp concludes that the wondertale is comprised of the dramatis personae's *spheres of actions*, which underpin the energetics of plot and the meaning of the wondertale narrative.) Such was his best and original authorial intention underlying his structural study and approach. Unfortunately, after the publication of *Morphology of the Folktale*, the author's intention was overlooked; instead, his *methodology* came to the fore in readers' and critics' attention and has since then suffered the verdict of reductive structuralism, or, formalism. (Claude Lévi-Strauss, for one, pointed out in friendly fashion that Propp's work ended up being an "inventory" of structural units and functions and was consequently devoid of ethnographic and social contextual significance.)⁷ Propp came to his own defense in a later work *Theory and History of Folklore* (1984) and attested that "[i]n folklore aesthetics, the plot makes up the content of a work" (77). That is to say, in analyzing and cataloguing the units and functions within the wondertale plot in *Morphology of the Folktale*, he did not just deal with the "form" of such narratives; he did not divorce plot structure from narrative meaning as a whole. (There will be more discussion of *Morphology of the Folktale* in Chapter 2.)

Despite the criticism, Propp's morphological study of narrative, albeit of a certain genre, did inspire later structural models and structuralist pronouncements. In the wake of Russian Formalism, French structuralists (e.g., Claude Bremond, A.J.-Greimas, Tzvetan Todorov, Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, etc.) gave birth to studies on extrapolating (universal) narrative grammars and structures on their front. Semiotician

⁷ See Lévi-Strauss' *Structural Anthropology* (1958) for more. The reader can also find his essay on Propp's work, as well as Propp's own returning response, in *Theory and History of Folklore* by Propp (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

A.-J. Greimas, for instance, proposed an actantial model with which he investigated the relationship and interaction among what he calls “actants” (actors) in narrative. Briefly put, the workings of plot are based on and point to actantial dynamics. Greimas’ and Propp’s models are of a kindred spirit in the sense that, according to them both, plot denotes the structure and structuration of characters’ (or actants’) actions and functions. (I will discuss Greimas’ structuralist model in greater detail in the next chapter.)

In extrapolating a “universal grammar” out of narrative language per se, Tzvetan Todorov (a defender and introducer of Russian Formalism) writes, “[t]o study the structure of a narrative’s plot, we must first present this plot in the form of a summary, in which each distinct action of the story has a corresponding proposition” (110). But it is not the agents (subjects and objects) that carry action in narrative. Rather, Todorov looks into the predicates (adjectives and verbs) and nominates “two types of episodes in narrative: those which describe a state (of equilibrium or of disequilibrium) and those which describe the passage from one state to the other” (111). The former pertains to adjectival functions and the latter to verbal ones. The structure and structuration of narrative then results from the dynamics and interplay of the predicates, the combinations and varieties of which generate different narrative moods. For Todorov, “an ‘ideal’ narrative begins with a stable situation which is disturbed by some power or force. There results a state of disequilibrium; by the action of a force directed in the opposite direction, the equilibrium is re-established; the second equilibrium is similar to the first, but the two are never identical” (Ibid.). As Peter Brooks comments, Todorov’s model best represents a linguistics approach to narrative but runs the risk of turning the meaning of narrative and the workings of plot into a “system”—and, if I may add, a system of internally-bound and intention-free energy as well as linguistic play.

In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes not only complicates the meaning of the term “text” but, in doing so, emphasizes the interpretative role and practice of the reader. What Barthes calls “the readerly text” renders the reader idly and passively receptive: “This reader is thereby plunged into a kind of idleness—he is intransitive; he is, in short, *serious*: instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text: reading is nothing more than a *referendum*” [Italics original] (4). On the other hand, what Barthes calls “the writerly text” engages the reader actively in the re-writing process of a given text. This “ideal” text bespeaks “a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds” (5). Barthes further proposes five codes with the instrumentality of which the reader can grasp a (writerly) text made of signifiers; in other words, these five codes facilitate the reader’s interpretative exercise and re-writing (reconstruction) of textual information, action, and meaning. They are: the *hermeneutic* code (HER), which functions either to “formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution”; the *seme* or *semic* code (SEM), which functions to “form a single thematic grouping”; the *proairetic* code (ACT), which relates to actions in narrative and their sequences; the *symbolic* code (SYM), which refers to the figurative level of signifiers; and, lastly, the *cultural* or *gnomic* code (REF), which tells the referential framework of knowledge, wisdom, or tradition on which the text relies. To put his own theory into practice, Barthes then uses the five codes to analyze, in dissected units, the structure and structuration of Balzac’s 1830 novella *Sarrasine*. Peter Brooks is right to proclaim the significance of Barthes’ study; as Brooks remarks, “we find that Barthes contributes to our conception of plot as part of the dynamics of reading” (18). Brooks adds, “[w]hat may be most significant about *S/Z* is its break away from the somewhat rigid notion of structure to the more fluid and dynamic notion of structuration” (Ibid.). However, for Brooks, Barthes’ codes most pertinent to the (conventional) notion

of plot are the hermeneutic and proairetic codes—what Brooks has in mind about the “dynamics” of plot results from the interplay between the two aforementioned codes, rather than among all five of them. I am afraid that Brooks’ “re-writing” of Barthes’ text has only bounced back to farther bind narrative plot to the “what” and/or “actions” in narrative, instead of truly liberating it from the latter (once again, let us not forget that Barthes’ hermeneutic code concerns questions or enigmas raised in a text and the proairetic code refers to actions, namely “what happens” and their sequences).

Structuralist models such as those aforementioned operate on the assumption that narrative has a logic and order of its own, and this inherent narrative logic and order are rule-bound, hence analyzable by way of a scientific methodology. Studying and analyzing the structure and structuration of narrative (as in plot units and actants, particularly their verbal functions) would facilitate our understanding of how narrative works. Apprehending the units or parts in narrative (again, plot included) is the means with/through which we grasp narrative meaning and design as a whole. Notwithstanding, the structuralist, as well as the formalist, approach in general (perhaps with Barthes’ code model as an exception) has been faulted for being reductive on the one hand and, on the other, for treating narrative language and meaning as self-contained (or self-enclosed), unexcitingly predictable (owing to a mathematical or scientific formulation and precision), and even to the extent of being fixed/fixated. *Perceived and understood as such*, structural analysis of events, actions, actants, functions, or codes in narrative structure, structuration, and emplotment indeed has not been able to endow narrative plot with new and more liberating aesthetic value and meaning. Narrative plots have become and been “reduced”—I believe not so much by the structuralist theorists themselves as by their receivers and interpreters—to an inquiry of action/function-finding, -mapping, and -decoding, however dynamic this business can

be. To this day, objections or skepticism can still be found. Richard Walsh, for instance, problematizes a number of the Russian formalist and French structuralist models in the third chapter entitled “Fabula and Fictionality in Narrative Theory” of his book *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* (2007).

Other projects that engage a discussion of plot manifest a different focus, such as on the relation, or more precisely, on the distinction between plot and story, or among plot, story (fabula), and discourse (syuzhet). E. M. Forster in *Aspects of the Novel* famously distinguishes “story” from “plot,” and he defines a “story” as “a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence. A plot is also a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality. ‘The king died and then the queen died’ is a story. ‘The king died, and then the queen died of grief’ is a plot. The time-sequence is preserved [in plot], but the sense of causality overshadows it” (86). However, narratologists such as Seymour Chatman and Thomas M. Leitch question the necessary condition of causality of narrative events for plot (as so defined by Forster) or for narrative (even for narrativity as Leitch argues⁸). Leitch goes so far as to argue that, if plot means “a temporal or causal sequence of events,” then “[s]tory is possible without plot” (130). He lists “the minimal plots of Joyce, Hemingway, and Woolf, and the antiplots of *Last Year at Marienbad* and Robbe-Grillet’s short fiction” as examples of those stories possible without plots (Ibid.). He does state in the following sentence that “[t]he great majority of stories, however, not only contain diegetic sequences of events, but display those sequences in a way that constitutes the plot as a distinctive trope for human experience” (Ibid.). Leitch’s argument concerning story possible without plot belongs with those challenges issued by postmodern narrative and literary theorists on the necessity of plot (and emplotment)

⁸ See the opening chapter “What Stories Aren’t” in Leitch’s book *What Stories Are: Narrative Theory and Interpretation* (1986), 3-17.

for narrative, particularly for modern and postmodern narratives and narrativity. True, if plot is seen exclusively or reductively as a causal and especially a temporal sequence of events, it is then understandable why studies on plot in postmodern times have lost currency. Here again, we should see the value of R. S. Crane's and Paul Ricœur's earlier calls for a more encompassing notion of plot, especially within the contexts of modern and postmodern narratives. Unfortunately, the association between plot and the mimetic/realist tradition, or, between plot and sequential (temporally determined) actions or events has been too firmly secured to allow for a revolutionary conceptual break.

The divide between plot/story and narrative discourse does not facilitate such a break; it reinforces their associations instead. Seymour Chatman's conceptualization of "story," unlike Forster's, does include "plot," in addition to "plot-time" (as opposed to the actual "reading-time"). "Plot," according to Chatman in *Story and Discourse*, consists of kernel events that are indispensable to narrative logic and can be accompanied by expendable satellite events (53-54). Chatman follows French structuralists (e.g., Tzvetan Todorov and Gérard Genette) in calling *the what of narrative* "story" and *the way of narrative* "discourse" and has thereby consolidated the Anglo-English pronouncement on the affinity between plot and story (fabula or histoire) as well as on the divide between plot/story and discourse (syuzhet or récit) in narrative. In his 2007 publication, *The Rhetoric of Fictionality*, Richard Walsh challenges Chatman's designation of "story" as the *what* and "discourse" as the *how* in narrative and their respective roles in narrative meaning-making. Rather than siding with the conventional narratological understanding of the relation (more precisely, divide) between story/fabula and discourse/syuzhet, Walsh argues:

[S]ujet [sic] is what we come to understand as a given (fictional narrative), and fabula is how we come to understand it. Our understanding, in other words, is not of ‘what happened’; it is of the weight and import of the narrative as actually told. [...]. The reader’s engagement with sujet does not enable the reconstruction of fabula [as is the conventional narratological view], but its construction. [...]. Fabula is always relative to and contingent upon both a given sujet and a specific act of interpretation. (68)

Walsh’s fresh argument is deconstructive enough in terms of our existent understanding of fabula (vis-à-vis syuzhet). Interestingly, not all theorists agree to align plot more with story/fabula (such has been the norm) than with discourse/syuzhet. In fact, as early as in 1925, Russian Formalist Boris Tomashevsky wrote in his essay “Thematics” that “[p]lot is distinct from story [fabula]. Both include the same events, but in the plot the events *are arranged* and connected according to the orderly sequence in which they were presented in the work” [Italics original] (*Russian Formalist Criticism* 67). And in the author’s own footnote on the above-quoted line, Tomashevsky further defined, “[i]n brief, the story is the action itself, [and] the plot, how the reader learns of the action” (Ibid.). In positing the term “motif” as “[t]he theme of an irreducible part of a work,” Tomashevsky asserted that “[m]utually related motifs form the thematic bonds of the work. From this point of view, the story [fabula] is the aggregate of motifs in their logical, causal-chronological order; the plot is the aggregate of those same motifs but having the relevance and the order which they had in the original work” (67, 68). Tomashevsky then concluded that “the aesthetic function of the plot is precisely this bringing of an arrangement of motifs to the attention of the reader. Real incidents, not fictionalized by an author, may make a story. A plot is wholly an artistic creation” (also qtd. in Walsh 53). Here we see a conceptual divorce of plot from story/fabula, and

Tomashevsky's notion of plot is akin to syuzhet, récit, or discourse. After Tomashevsky in 1925, Walsh is one contemporary narratologist who sees a deeper connection, rather than split, between plot and syuzhet. Walsh argues that a narrative event, "as a unit of action, is constituted by discourse, under a narrative mode of interpretation," suggesting that plot, comprised of units of action, is constituted and bestowed meaning, not by fabula, but by discourse or syuzhet (57). In other words, both Tomashevsky and Walsh refuse to see plot as a mere chronological and/or causal stringing of events; they both suggest that the value of plot is largely determined by the way in which events (or in Tomashevsky's phrasing, motifs) are presented by the author and further apprehended and interpreted by the reader in their engagement with a narrative text. Notwithstanding, despite his innovative arguments (such as: syuzhet is not the reconstruction, but the construction of fabula on the part of the reader, and, in this sense, plot belongs with the former), Walsh in 2007 still, like the majority of past and contemporary narratologists, cannot resist discoursing about plot (its place) within the story-discourse/fabula-syuzhet conceptual and verbal frameworks (again, see his third chapter "Fabula and Fictionality in Narrative Theory" in *The Rhetoric of Fictionality* for more).

In whichever case of theoretical alignment, such studies as afore-discussed testify to a point of the historical movement in the field of narratology in relation to plot—from plot and the mimetic tradition, plot as a meaningful structural unit of narrative and narrative studies, to the developed divorce of plot from narrative discourse (still current to this day, despite Walsh's recent bridging of plot and discourse). Unfortunately, this progression in the study of and theorization about plot sees an ossification, rather than true liberation, of the meaning and significance of this narrative constituent: that is, plot belongs with the mimetic, realist, and/or structuralist traditions and with long-past

theoretical orientations and methodologies as such. I believe that in postmodern eras only Peter Brooks can be said to have rescued the discussion of plot in a truly revolutionizing way.

On the one hand, Brooks participated in the 1970s and 1980s' narratological inquiry into narrative dynamics with a view to the reader's active role in narrative engagement and reading practice. As Brooks himself puts it:

Narratology [particularly the structural branch of narratology] has, of course, properly been conceived as a branch of poetics, seeking to delineate the types of narrative, their conventions, and the formal conditions of the meanings they generate; whereas I am more concerned with how narratives work on us, as readers, to create models of understanding, and with why we need and want such shaping orders. ("Preface" xiii)

With the reader's participatory role and interest in mind, Brooks emphasizes that *reading for the plot* features a crucial step in making sense of narrative meaning and, equally significant, fulfilling the reader's desire of reading onward to and for an end (whatever that end may be). As Brooks declares, "[d]esire is the [reader's] wish for the end, for fulfillment" (111).⁹ That is to say, once engaged in narrative reading, the reader shares and partakes in the forward-going life force of a given narrative and thereby gains readerly pleasure (and "fulfillment") from a life-propelling participation and expectation of what is to come or in store for the reader (again, irrespective of what that end may be). On the other hand, Brooks excavates existent narratological theorizations about plot from the trappings of the dual relation between story and discourse (between *fabula* and *syuzhet*) and morphs the life of plot into a biological (organic) and psychological one. He

⁹ Brooks' original statement runs longer: "Desire is the wish for the end, for fulfillment, but fulfillment must be delayed so that we can understand it in relation to origin and to desire itself" (111).

uses the bio-psychological workings of plot to reexamine not only the *what* and *how* but also the *why* of narrative (e.g., *why* narrative desires delay in the middle and a lucid repose at the end, which will be mentioned in greater detail later). Ultimately, as Brooks voices this part of his authorial intention, “we may dream of a convergence of psychoanalysis and literary criticism because we sense that there ought to be a correspondence between literary and psychic dynamics [...]. Through study of the work accomplished by fictions [narratives] we may be able to reconnect literary criticism to human concern” (“Preface” xiv).

This project of mine is inspired by Peter Brooks’ *Reading for the Plot*, a classic in the field of narratology. Prior to reading Brooks, I had always been fascinated by the subjects of psychology, psychoanalysis, and narrative, particularly the workings of narrative plot. Brooks’ pioneering work gave me hope in terms of witnessing some substantial and significant bridging between psychology and narrative theory, again, plot in particular. After reading Brooks, I could not stop thinking about doing a narratological project on the relationship between psychology and narrative plot—but in my own terms and with a different psychoanalytic framework than Freud’s, which is indeed the theoretical basis for Brooks’ narrative study. Therefore, my narratological project sees continued efforts at investigating the interconnectedness between textual and psychic dynamics. Yet, it is furthermore a response to, if not challenge of, Brooks’ theory on desire, narrative, and plot. (I believe, so far, only feminist narratologist Susan Winnett has *significantly* challenged Brooks’ arguments on the *gender* front, but there has been no challenge placed on Brooks’ model from within his own psychoanalytic praxis.) In other words, my project follows in Brooks’ footsteps and inquires into *what* narrative in general and plot in particular desire, *how* they desire, and *why* they desire and work the way they do. But let us go back to Brooks’ theory, and, in a short while, I

will show my departure from his Freudian model, including my reasons for choosing the Lacanian psychoanalytic framework for my own narrative theory on plot.

In *Reading for the Plot*, Brooks makes a case for the significance of plot, better still, of plotting as a dynamic textual force, in relation to narrative. Brooks observes, “[i]n our century, we have become more suspicious of plots, more acutely aware of their artifice, their arbitrary relation to time and chance, though we no doubt still depend on elements of plotting, however ironized or parodied, more than we realize” (“Preface” xii). Brooks further extends his concern with plot to plotting:

Even more than with plot, no doubt, I shall be concerned with plotting: with the activity of shaping, with the dynamic aspect of narrative—that which makes a plot “move forward,” and makes us read forward, seeking in the unfolding of the narrative a line of intention and a portent of design that hold the promise of progress towards meaning. (“Preface” xiii)

According to Brooks, it is plot, of all the narrative constituents, that connects units of meaning in narrative and drives them forward; this underlying argument about the relation between plot and narrative is not unlike Propp’s and Greimas’. But to Brooks, plot also functions as the one and only narrative agency that materializes a textual erotics and energetics and speaks, in Freudian terms, for the human desire for life’s initial (and final) state—a state of quiescence—toward which any organism exerts itself beyond the pleasure principle. Thus, operating as “a steam engine,” plot is “the dynamic shaping force of the narrative discourse” (13); plot/plotting is, as Brooks further defines it, “the organizing line and intention of narrative” (37). Reading for the plot, then, should no

longer be considered as a mode of mass consumption and thus “a low form of activity” (4). Reading for the plot, in this sense, is reading for humankind’s wish-fulfillment.¹⁰

Yet, what wish of *humankind* (not just the human subject as reader) needs fulfillment through (reading) narrative? Perhaps we should take another step back and inquire how plot gets started in the first place, for the genesis of plot is crucial to our understanding of the *raison d’être* of narrative. Brooks argues, “[d]esire is always there at the start of a narrative, often in a state of initial arousal, often having reached a state of intensity such that movement must be created, action undertaken, change begun” (38). In other words, Brooks sees a narrative text as a living organism—with the (reading) human subject included—that is charged with its internal energies, tensions, desires, and like-life forces.¹¹ For Brooks, it is the aroused and arousing narrative desire for an ultimate discharge of textual erotics and energetics that sets plot in motion and defines the intention of narrative life and meaning. Based on Freud’s observation repeatedly cited by Brooks, “*the aim of all life is death*,” Brooks theorizes about the desire of narrative and the operation of plot/plotting:

What operates in the text through repetition is the death instinct, the drive toward the end. Beyond and under the domination of the pleasure principle is this baseline of plot, its basic “pulsation,” sensible or audible through the repetitions that take us back in the text. Yet repetition also retards the pleasure principle’s search for the gratification of discharge, which is another forward-moving drive of the text. (102-03)

He further argues:

¹⁰ See footnote 7.

¹¹ In his preface Brooks states that “I want to see the text itself as a system of internal energies and tensions, compulsions, resistances, and desires” (xiv).

Between these two moments of quiescence [the beginning and end of any organic life], plot itself stands as a kind of divergence or deviance, a postponement in the discharge which leads back to the inanimate. For plot starts (or must give the illusion of starting) from that moment at which story, or “life,” is stimulated from quiescence into a state of narratability, into a tension, a kind of irritation, which demands narration. I spoke earlier of narrative desire, the arousal that creates the narratable as a condition of tumescence, appetency, ambition, quest, and gives narrative a forward-looking intention. (103)

Hence, according to Brooks’ Freudian reading, narrative (again, like any living organism with the human subject included) desires to go forward in order to reach a quiescent end, and plot encapsulates this forward-going life force and end-related intention of narrative, meanwhile constituting the energy field wherein both the life and death instincts of narrative are at work—and at play. With plot being its motoring and discharging agency, narrative fulfills not only the (reading) human subject’s but also its own dual desires for life *and* death, for pleasure *and* rest. And if pleasure is properly delayed and thereby proportionately enhanced in the narrative middle (or, in the “dilatatory space” as Roland Barthes terms it), its ultimate discharge in the end will bring narrative to a *pleasurable death*, a *closure*, so to speak.

For a feminist narratologist like Susan Winnett (see, for instance, her 1990 PMLA article, “Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure”), Brooks’ theory on the energetics of plot—the more plot is delayed in the narrative middle, the more pleasure (and heightened pleasure as it is) a given narrative text is able to proffer its reader as well as itself upon the final “discharge” of tension and satisfaction at its narrative end—bespeaks a male erotics and phallogocentric energetics. Winnett’s criticism is right on target. For me, Brooks’ theory points to an *autogenetic, autoerotic, and even*

narcissistic energetics of narrative whose meanings and possibilities, if read this way, will soon be exhausted. His exegesis illumines the physiologic-organic-libidinal forces and workings of narrative in conjunction with the human psyche, but it fails to explain the nature, the complexity, and the *situatedness* of human desire that comes to define and shape the desire of narrative as well as our desire for narrativity. Seen in the light of Brook's Freudian model, narratives seem to constitute self-enclosed sites where textual energies generate, belatedly release themselves, and eventually (upon being satisfied) die out from within, needless of having to interact with and be interacted upon by forces from without (without, for instance, political and/or socio-cultural shaping forces). Given Brooks' own premise that textual dynamics mirrors human psychical dynamics, is this the way the human self behaves and functions—without, for instance, taking into account the relation between self and other?¹² Besides, to name a few other problematic issues Brooks' exegesis raises, his model fails to account for modern and post-modern resistances to narrative closure and to pleasurable deaths as “happy endings” (which bring about “quiescent” narrative ends). Brooks has successfully tackled textual erotics, energetics, and organicity, but not narrative affectivity and its impact upon the human reader. His model also cannot explain the phenomenon of anxiety which, according to Lacan, is not an emotion but *an affect* in close relation to human desire.¹³ Indeed, an understanding of the true nature and operation of human desire is the crux of our comprehension of the *raison d'être* of narrative as well as “narrative desire” (Brooks' term).

We want to understand the nature and workings of human desire because we want to apprehend the nature and workings of narrative, given that narrative has a great deal to

¹² The “other,” not capitalized here, is used not in the particular Lacanian sense but as a general term such as “others.” The Lacanian use of other vis-à-vis Other will be introduced in Chapter 2.

¹³ I will examine in length the relationship between anxiety as *affect* and desire in my later chapters.

do with our lives and the human condition. I share with Brooks the same conviction that there is an entwined and profound relationship between textual and psychic dynamics that deserves deeper investigation. Nevertheless, I depart from Brooks, along with his Freudian model, in that I believe it is Jacques Lacan who has truly pried into and diagrammed human desire. The pleasure principle is, as I here reiterate Lacan's argument, a principle of homeostasis. Despite Brooks' attempt to travel *beyond* the pleasure principle, his "erotics of [narrative] art" ("Preface" xv) works along the lines of such a psychical principle—in brief, a timely release or discharge of mounted pleasure (Lust) is used to vend off unpleasure (Unlust) and thereby safeguard the right amount of intake of (textual as well as readerly) pleasure. To (however unwittingly) base the workings of narrative and the operation of plot on the homeostatic pleasure principle is to enforce the idea of narrative, together with its motoring agency (i.e., plot), as being self-sufficiently inert and physiologically libido-driven, if not also libido-bound. Such a model cannot fully account for the nature and complexities of textual and human desires.

Based on Lacanian theory, I argue in the first place that narrative exists as a partial object or *objet petit a*, and Lacan defines the term *objet petit a* as that which causes, mediates, and sustains human desire. With this Lacanian term I argue that narrative is as much a product or reification of (writerly and/or readerly) desire as that which sets and sustains human desire in motion. Narrative as a cause, not only an end-product, of desire explains the inexhaustibility of human desire for narrative and the *raison d'être* of narrative's existence. Narrative as object *and* *objet petit a* of desire bespeaks the two levels of narrative significance. With the survival of narrative, human desire survives and continues its motility in the chain of narrative signification. That is to say, *we desire metonymically through narrative*. After all, as Dylan Evans points out, Lacan follows Spinoza in arguing that the human subject is the subject of desire and that desire is "the

essence of man” (*Seminar XI* 107). Narrative as *objet petit a*, the cause of desire, captures and sustains this essence of the human subject.

Narrative as *objet petit a*¹⁴ enables the subject’s encounter with the three Lacanian orders of human psychic reality—the real, the imaginary and the symbolic. Woven in language, language being always the language of the Other, narrative texts are comprised of the symbolic order and thereby differ from paintings (pictorial narratives), for instance. This is to say, narrative, constituted in language and functioning as *objet petit a*—a.k.a. “the rem(a)inder of the Other,”¹⁵ reflects (and in some cases, deflects) our relation to the Other and/or the symbolic order per se. Political or socio-culturally-driven narratives are especially manifest in being the causes of the human subject’s desire to dialogue with the Other and (re)negotiate his/her symbolized position in the symbolic order. On a different (psychical) front, narrative also allows the human subject to find and (re)experience in the language of the Other *lalangue*, the raw matter which prefigures language, exists before the symbolic, and points to the real.¹⁶ One of the late-comers in Lacanian teaching, this 70s term *lalangue* is Lacan’s coinage of the definite article *la* and the word *langue* (“language” or “tongue”). Jacques-Alain Miller, Lacan’s son-in-law and literary executor, explicates the master’s term with an example from Michel Leiris’ four-volume *Rule of the Game* (1948-1976): *lalangue* is a child’s verbal ejaculation of (nonsensical) words such as “Appily!” before the child’s socialization or symbolization through his/her acquired and correct(ed) articulation of “Happily.” *Lalangue*, in this light, constitutes an experience of *jouissance* in the real prior to and challenging the symbolic order and signification. Lacan argues that the joy *lalangue*

¹⁴ I will stop italicizing this Lacanian term, except where I intend to highlight this concept in my (con)text. The same applies to the other Lacanian terms, such as the real, the imaginary, the symbolic, *jouissance*, lack, and the like.

¹⁵ In brief here, *objet petit a* features a part of/in the desired Other, hence both a *remainder* and *reminder* of that Other of one’s desire. More will be introduced about this Lacanian concept in Chapter 2.

¹⁶ Partly from the Lacanian concept of *lalangue* derives Julia Kristeva’s own term *chora*, with emphasis added on the relation between *chora* and the maternal body and its semiotics.

brings, as exemplified by James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, a text the French psychoanalyst himself much admired and relished, lies in its noncommunicative essence. In other words, *lalangue* brings the kind of joy that escapes symbolization and allows for freedom to desire (that which cannot or refuses to be symbolized, codified, and unified). To look into the language of the Other for *lalangue*, or, to look into the symbolic for the real, certainly speaks to one of the reasons why we cannot quit reading Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, Gertrude Stein, and, to crown it all, James Joyce.

Finally, narrative functioning as *objet petit a* and, particularly, the act of reading narratives as such engage us in examining and reflecting on the *imaginary* relationship between our selves and our specular others (or *imagos*) as materialized in or embodied by fictional characters. (The word "imaginary" is italicized here because I refer specifically to the *imaginary* order of Lacanian theory, which entails the concept of the mirror stage, in tandem with the relation between one's ego and his or her specular others. These Lacanian terms will be further introduced and explained in the next chapter and explored within literary texts in Chapter 4.) This imaginary encounter with narratives points to the issue of readerly identification by way of psychically comparing ourselves with or to the characters, together with their narrative situations, we read about. This is something we repeatedly hear or learn from our students—i.e., their initial *imaginary* (instead of critically objective) engagements with narrative texts and their fictional characters. For instance, I have students who told me they *adored* Margaret Hale, the heroine of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, or (child) Maggie Tulliver of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* because they can "relate to" such characters and their life experiences, whereas, *by contrast*, they strongly disliked Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* because they could not really "relate to" the characters therein (however much they felt sympathetic toward Louisa Gradgrind, for instance). Indeed, to guide students

from their initial *imaginary* engagements with literature towards more objective, more analytical ones bespeaks one important objective of our teacherly practices. There is a section in the next chapter devoted to this *imaginary* encounter between the reader and narrative—to the reading of narrative as objet petit a, the cause of desire for readerly identification and its negotiation. Last but not least, narrative as objet petit a functions as the fantasy through which humankind comes to deal with its quintessential experience of lack and anxiety. Here plot, above all the other narrative constituents, becomes the one narrative agency that brings the human subject face to face with his/her anxiety and lack (the Lacanian truths of the human condition). How plot brings about this contact—one of the crucial arguments of this project—will be discussed and, hopefully, become clear later in this introduction and in the subsequent chapters.

The existent narratological discussion of plot has been conducted, just as most narratives have been written, thanks to Aristotle, in *medias res*. In *The Sense of an Ending*, which inspired Peter Brooks' own narrative project, Frank Kermode describes the beginning of plot as a *tick*, “a humble genesis,” which should be followed by a *tock*, “a feeble apocalypse” (45). It is the middle that works out the human crisis and the end that is immanent, the two of which have aroused more attention and evoked more investigation than narrative beginning. Likewise, Brooks pays attention to the middle which, according to *Reading for the Plot*, should come into the service of the end; to recapitulate, the middle should be properly delayed so that the end can reach its deserved climax and provide the reader with a final discharge of ultimate pleasure. The beginning, on the other hand, is simply caused, or in his words, *excited* or *aroused*, thereby kicking off the deviatory journey of the middle. But what exactly causes narrative beginning? What makes it *tick* in the first place? What is the genesis of plot *on the psychological level* (especially considering our present inquiry into the correlation

between textual and psychical workings)? Once *caused* to take off, how then does plot orient towards its narrative end? Finally, how do we interpret the affectivity of those narrative endings that refuse (en)closure and render affects such as anxiety and pleasure-in-pain (in Lacanian terms, *jouissance*)—affects which defy the run-down designating rubric of “tragic” or “happy” when it comes to “the end”? I am hoping that, with the aid of Lacanian theory (on desire, to begin with), together with its vocabulary (e.g., *objet petit a*, *jouissance*, etc.) and the psychological truths it helps enunciate, all such questions can be satisfactorily tackled along the progression of this project, and questions as raised above will function as points of entrance to a critical narratological discussion and theorization about the energetics of plot and the nature of desire in narrative at large.

I am, of course, fully aware that, even prior to their engagement with this project, some of my readers may have held reservations about, even distaste for, Lacanian theory (if not Lacan himself to boot), especially the notoriously enigmatic, elusive, and convoluted “style” in which it was constructed and conducts psychological inquiries. Indeed, it is no easy task to tackle Lacanian theory. In the expanse of his forty-year-long teaching and lecturing (almost all the existent published Lacanian texts are results of the others’ transcriptions from his interviews and lectures and some remain still unpublished), Lacan not only developed but also complicated a lot of his (earlier) concepts and locutions. For instance, Lacan discussed the term *jouissance*, which is one of the underpinning concepts in my own project, within the context of one’s relation to law in the 1960s (see his *Ethics* seminar), whereas he used the same term to discourse about man’s vis-à-vis woman’s position regarding symbolic castration and enclosure in the 1970s (see his *Encore* seminar). The famous Lacanian big Other (with a capitalized O, apart from the small o as in *objet petit a*) took on at least six different denotations

throughout the different stages of his teaching (I will touch on this variation in Chapter 4). In my project on the whole, I use the big Other to refer to the locus of the symbolic order (as Lacan did in the main). The big Other as the locus of the symbolic order, law, and/or language can signify, for instance, mother, father, or God as such Other, hence the respective (Lacanian-customary) written expressions of mOther, fOther, or FOther. (At times in this project, there will be parentheses around the letters *m*, *f*, and *F* to emphasize the role of Other in mother, father, and God. If, on the other hand, there are parentheses around the capitalized letter O in any such terms, then the role of Other is secondary yet implied none the less.) Also, Lacan's (as well as my own) use of *objet petit a* can mean both "rem(a)inder of the Other" and cause of desire, but we should understand that the two semantic layers of the term are (fortunately) interrelated: an *objet petit a* functions as the rem(a)inder of the Other, so it exists as the cause of one's desire since one's desire is the desire of the Other. Furthermore (and to avoid confusion), I will, on befitting occasions in this project, use the expressions of "the other" and "the o/Other." The small other, in these cases, refers *not* to the *objet petit a*, *but rather* to the specular other (or imago) of the Lacanian *imaginary* order, as opposed to the big Other of the symbolic realm. And whenever I conjoin the imaginary other and the symbolic Other as in the locution of "o/Other," it can mean *either* (the imaginary other) *or* (the symbolic Other), *or, both* (the imaginary other) *and* (the symbolic Other), again depending on the context. My readers shall see that the three Lacanian concepts—*objet petit a*, (imaginary) other, and (symbolic) Other—serve as part of the underpinnings of my narratological discussion. Regarding other no less important Lacanian terms used in my project, I try to explain and render them as intelligible as possible. Sometimes I will even reiterate their definitions or connotations, but it is nothing more than a gesture of friendly reminders. Whenever necessary, I will also turn to other Lacanians', such as

Bruce Fink's and Dylan Evans', (re-)phrasings or recapitulations of Lacan's own notions, but this is done as an attempt to further shed light upon Lacanian theory as a whole.

Lastly, I would like to give my readers a few friendly heads-up here prior to any engagement with my later chapters. In theorizing about the workings of plot, I venture to bring in and anchor such Lacanian locutions as "the discourse of the Hysteric" and "the discourse of the Analyst" (together with the discourses of the Master and the University) to and within my own theory on what I call "plot discourses" (Chapter 3). Readers will encounter my discussion of, for instance, Shakespeare's *King Lear* *functioning within* the discourse of the Hysteric, besides the Master's discourse (again, see Chapter 3 for more). My use of such Lacanian locutions on our beloved fictive character(s) may sound problematic and even offensive to some readers. Likewise, in positing my own model on three types of reading modes and readerly identifications (Chapter 2), I resort to such psychoanalytic terms as "psychotic" and "neurotic" (in addition to the "metaphoric" mode of reading). It is my hope that, after reading the chapters, my audience will eventually, to whatever degree, come to terms with such vocabulary and see my reasons for using them as such. Concerning my model of narrative (end-)jouissances (see Chapters 3 and 4), I refer *especially* to those narratives that manifest an admixture of affects (such as anxiety and pleasure-in-pain/suffering). My use of the Lacanian notion of jouissance would not apply to other narratives that do not show affects. Finally, considering the complexity of the Lacanian theoretical framework, readers may not want to skip my bracketed or parenthetical information and footnotes. The notes on the whole, whether or not they refer to Lacanian theory specifically, may contain some important additional information or explanation for completing my readers' apprehension of this project in its entirety. (They would function as what Genette calls the "paratext" of my larger narratological text.) As said, I

believe that Lacanian theory has something invaluable to offer us when we come to rethink narrative, particularly on the psychological level, and I wish to show with this work that it could at least give us a credible theoretical framework and pertinent vocabulary with which to name and nail the things we can still discover in and about plot and narrative.

[III]

This “narrative of narrative”

At the beginning there is desire. Without a working desire in motion and already embedded at the narrative beginning such as the heroes’ desire to see the world and seek something lacking at home, something that lies yonder somewhere instead, we would not have had those time-abiding narratives of, for instance, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Johnson’s *Rasselas*, Melville’s *Moby Dick* (and the list goes on). More, we would not have had such revealing narrative testimonials on the nature of human desire, for each narrative bespeaks a quest for something or someone we desire, wish to name, and *hopefully* can find at a narrative end. As this project will manifest, narratives concern first and foremost human desire. I agree with Brooks that desire is the motive for narrative and the driving force of narrative plot. But what, after all, do humans desire? What do humans want? Such questions have long featured one of the most sought-after philosophical pursuits and have served as the starting points of various psychologists’ and psychoanalysts’ works and theories. Besides Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan, it is known that prior to the development of his affect theory, Silvan S. Tomkins was first engaged in “a love affair with an idea” (Demos, ed., 27): *what do human beings really want?*

At the beginning of human existence, narrative existence, and the existence of this project, there is a most human desire for freedom to desire, which is, I argue, the underpinning logic of narrative and the driving force of narrative plot on the whole. The seeming tautology of my grounding argument points to the existential and ontological human fact that this freedom, this yearning for desiring our hearts' desires, is (de)limited. Lacan emphasizes that, once born and having acquired language (the language of the Other), we can never truly and wholly re-possess that which is forever lost to us at the onset of our symbolic and symbolized existence—i.e., the un-cut, un-split, and un-separated wholeness of self and being, or, in Lacanian term, *the real*.

According to Lacan, what we humans want and truly desire is the real. However, the Lacanian real is and remains an existential impossibility because, upon birth, we are physically (though not necessarily psychically) separated from the (m)Other for good.¹⁷ The Lacanian notion of *lack* points to this cut or separation from the real; therefore, *lack* belongs with the symbolic order of human existence—and experience. Even the acquisition of language can be of no avail, for, as Lacan argues, the more we use language constituted of a chain of signifiers with their (de)limited meaning, the more we are delayed and kept by gaps in language from appropriating the real, the master signified

¹⁷ When I argue that, once born, we are *physically*, though not necessarily psychically, separated from the (m)Other for good, I have clinical neurotics, psychotics, and perverts in mind. As Lacanian psychoanalytic theorist and practitioner Bruce Fink remarks, the psychotic, for instance, never experiences an initial psychical cut, or what Fink calls “alienation,” from the mother (she is not experienced as an Other); the psychotic never experiences in his or her psychical formation *le nom/non du père*, the name/no of the father, whose function is supposed to effectually alienate the child from the mother in the first place so that the child subject can later function in the symbolic order and assimilate symbolic authority/authorities. The neurotics and perverts, on the other hand, are “alienated” from the mOther (mother as Other); they do pass through the first stage (alienation) of a human subject’s psychical formation. But they refuse to be psychically “separated” from the mOther, hence developing different defense mechanisms against a split as such. A pervert’s obsession with an object (or objects of the same or similar nature), for example, bespeaks one of the defense mechanisms owing to the subject’s refusal to a psychical separation from the mOther. Hence, once born, humans are *physically* separated from the (m)Other, but not all men (or women) can accept, again psychically speaking, separation as such. For more on this subject, consult Bruce Fink’s *Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1999).

(there is, in theory, no master signifier for the real). Hence, we can only desire *metonymically* that which would point to our primal and maximal enjoyment and satisfaction (of non-differentiated wholeness or oneness of self, so to speak). *We desire metonymically through narrative, for instance.* This is one of the major arguments foregrounding my project on the relationship among narrative, reading, and desire.

Narrative functioning as *objet petit a* sustains our *human* (again, not just readerly) desire and (re)configures our fantasies about the ways in which we could be free to repossess the lost yet ever-desired object—the rem(a)inder of the Other—which, as aforementioned, is separated in some substantial time and space from us since the beginning. Narrative functioning as *objet petit a* also (re)configures our fantasies about the ways in which we grapple with this irrevocable separation and negotiate our engulfed distance from the Other. Maud Ellmann well remarks, “[a]rt is the means by which we lost the object in order to call it back in a new form” (“Introduction,” *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, xxii), and I would like to supplement Ellmann’s remark by adding that narrative is the means by which we call back the lost object as *l’objet petit a* *not only in a new form but within a newly negotiated distance from or proximity to the Other as well.* Again, let us not forget that *objet petit a* is or functions as rem(a)inder of the Other; therefore, our distance from or proximity to the lost/desired object as *l’objet petit a* points to our distance from or proximity to the desired Other. I will argue in Chapter 2 that the beginning of narrative plot is, generally speaking, premised upon and consists in absence or lack. Because of this “insufficiency” (a term used by Vladimir Propp in describing the “initial situation” of his narrative materials), there is all the more desire in narrative for non-lack and in fairy tales, for instance, for a “liquidation” of lack or insufficiency.

Hence, at the beginning there is desire—*and lack*. Desire points to lack. We desire because we lack; we lack the real in our symbolic existence, an existence symbolized by language; we lack the wholeness of the real in a symbolized existence constituted of linguistic and existential gaps, holes, and insufficiencies. Of course, not all narratives end in a “liquidation” of absence or lack (as do “fairy tales”). Such narratives, I believe, bespeak a true psychological realism, for, psychologically speaking, the non-lack state of being is and remains, again, an existential impossibility. Those narratives that acknowledge or (re)enact this psychological realism can often be fraught with pain, together with an unappeasable sense of loss, and bring pain and loss upon their human readers. This is often the acknowledgement of postmodern narratives (more will be discussed in the epilogue). Consequently, when I state that desire exists at the (human existential as well as narrative) beginning, such a beginning already implies an imminence, if not also immanence, of absence, lack, or even loss: a desired object, a rem(a)inder of a person (an Other), a part of one’s self (e.g., an imago), a time in the past, a place or space, a trace of memory, a dream, an ideal, an experience. In the light of this psychological realism, narrative is as much about desire as about loss. Narrative is ultimately concerned with a lost or absent(ed) *something/someone* which/whom, through the linguistic and imagistic webs of narratives, is named, approximately defined, and, through the exertions of plots, desired, resurrected, kept alive, sought after, accessed, and, idealistically speaking, mastered. Indeed, narrative plots operate on the same principle as does the famous *fort/da* game played by Freud’s grandson (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 12-17)—one that entails a constant making of the disappearance and re-appearance of the desired object (which can be now understood as l’objet petit a) and thereby enables the human subject to keep his/her desire (for the beloved Other) alive, master loss, and negotiate the space in between.

In those narratives that mimic our life process, the line between desire (or, better still, desiring) and mourning is blurred. Yet, just as in life we manage our losses in many a different way, so do we with and in narratives—and this difference is reflected in a *difference in plot and plotting*, especially in a *difference in the end-jouissance* (namely, pleasure-in-pain emitted or embraced at narrative endings; see Chapter 4). In an end such as that of *The Mill on the Floss* which tells (according to the words etched on the tombstone for Maggie and Tom Tulliver), “[i]n their death they were not divided,” the fantasy of non-lack between self and other is maximally achieved. The psychical fantasy of embracing the real (the state of wholeness) may be Maggie’s, the narrator’s, the author’s, or the reader’s. No matter. The significance of such a narrative end lies in the fulfillment of the human psychical fantasy itself. It is achieved in what I call the narrative end-jouissance of the real wherein there is and will be no lack, no separation, no loss. (Two other literary exemplars would be the King Lear-Cordelia and Catherine-Heathcliff plots which will also be discussed in the later chapters.)

Indeed, narratives do seem to possess an inherently significant relationship with the human act of mourning. Freud himself acknowledges, “we have no option but to find compensations in the world of fiction, in literature, in the theatre for that which we have lost in life” (*On Murder, Mourning, and Melancholia* 185). In other words, we mourn—metonymically—through literature. Narrative, particularly given the space of the narrative middle, provides us with an opportunity to act out our mourning process (e.g., Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, Roland Barthes’ *Camera Lucida*, Paul Auster’s *The Book of Illusions*, etc.). A full-scale discussion of the relationship between narrative and mourning is beyond the scope of this project. However, I want to suggest here that Georg Lukács, in his *Theory of the Novel* (1968; translated into English in 1971), already hints at such a relationship. Lukács states, “[t]he novel is the epic of a world that has

been abandoned by God” (88). Because of the absence, disappearance, even death of God in the face of the eighteenth-century rationalistic scientific discourse (as in the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*), there is a touch of “the deepest melancholy of every great and genuine novel” (85). Lukács points out an inherent “nostalgia of the soul” for “home” in the structuration of the novel (87). On the one hand, the hero/heroine of the novel mourns and longs for a “home” that can no longer be found in the House of God, and, on the other, it is this loss that gives the novel (together with its hero/heroine) a new-found freedom to search for its form and a relocation of humankind’s existential meaning. Lukács’ expostulation is useful in our grasp of the relationship between narrative and mourning.

However the beginning of narrative is premised upon absence, lack, loss, and mourning, I attest that narrative ultimately points to a freedom for the human subject to desire anew—and metonymically. Albeit discussed in this project primarily in Lacanian terms, narrative is not all about nostalgic pessimism (as, on numerous occasions, Lacanian theory has been and is still to this day faulted for being such). Narrative has a Janus face: it looks back to the onset of the human condition that entails lack, mourns it, and meanwhile looks forward to a re-negotiation with or new understanding of lack. In the best cases, narrative allows us to apprehend lack and reconfigure desire—or, ways to desire.

Patrick O’Neill is right in affirming that narratology is “the narrative of narrative” (13). This project of mine, albeit seen through the particular lens of Lacanian psychoanalytic framework, is all in all a narratological project. That is to say, this “narrative of narrative” of mine is not so much an “application” of Lacanian theory to narratives (namely, X in Lacanian theory = X₁ in narrative or vice versa) as one that engages the Lacanian theoretical vocabulary to rethink and further theorize about narrative (its *raison d’être*,

for instance), the act of reading (Chapter 2), and the workings and affects (e.g., anxiety and jouissance) of narrative plots (Chapters 3 and 4). With this said, I have devoted three consecutive chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) to each of the three plot “segments,” i.e., narrative beginning, middle, and end.

Chapter 2 briefly introduces an array of Lacanian terms and concepts pertinent to this narratological project and inquires into the function of narrative. Readers will be oriented in this chapter toward almost all the relevant parts of Lacanian theory and vocabulary, except an introduction of the four Lacanian discourses with which I will theorize about the narrative middle, but this can be found in Chapter 3. Furthermore, this chapter embraces *four pivotal beginnings* for my “narrative of narrative” to begin with: they are the primeval forms or beginnings of human narrative (namely, fairy- and folktales), the beginning models of narrative studies on the afore-mentioned narrative genre (i.e., Russian Formalist Vladimir Propp’s and French semiotician A.-J. Greimas’ models of narrative structuralism), the beginning of narrative plot (in other words, the starting point of plot; how plot kicks off or “ticks” in the first place), and, to top it all, the onset of the human condition (i.e., the psychical *lack* that points to the real). In other words, this chapter weaves an intersection among these four beginnings and meanwhile reassesses the values of Propp’s and Greimas’ structuralist models on the psychical level.

For instance, as Propp’s study evinces, at the outset of a tale (a narrative) there is absence or lack. The plot of a given tale is then driven forward by a (hero’s or heroine’s) desire to “liquidate” that absence (or lack). Decades later, Jacques Lacan formulated his psychoanalytic theory about *the real*: at the onset of human existence there is lack (an irretrievable separation between one and one’s object of desire). The Lacanian real

points to an inherent human desire to return to the ex-isting¹⁸ condition of non-lack. This chapter engages Propp's morphological study on the psychological level and argues that, at the narrative end of a fairy tale, the object of one's desire can be obtained, (re)claimed, and (re)possessed and its lack be liquidated, whereas the Lacanian real remains an impossibility, hence a demystified (re-)vision of the human tale. In this light, the defining narrative act in a fairy tale or a fairy-tale-like narrative consists in this ultimate "liquidation" of lack. In either case (whether or not a lack can be liquidated, and whether or not a narrative is therefore a "fairy tale"), the human tale begins with the narrative and human existential lack. Because of lack, desire is born. Desire points to and presupposes lack, and the onset of the human condition is, by way of artistic craft and by dictates of the human unconsciousness, morphed into the onset of narrative beginning. Such a narrative beginning is more than a simple literary or a creationist's act. At bottom, it signifies or points to an *acting-out*. An *acting-out* of what? Of desire—of an anxious desire for freedom to desire a trajectory, a "dilatatory space," a middle, and within the middle space of narrative plot the human subject negotiates the harsh deal of lack (or the split between self and other and/or object of desire) without having to plunge prematurely, empty-handedly, and right back into a head-on encounter with the red mask of death. (What else is, for instance, Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* or Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* quintessentially about if not this?) Hence, narrative beginning anticipates a middle, for what is a narrative middle if not a space—a bargained-for, deliberated, and extended space to accommodate the continuum of time which tells the continuum of human and narrative existence? Narrative beginning anticipates a search, a quest, a bargain, a negotiation, and, *at best*, a recognition (of the

¹⁸ According to Lacan, the real "ex-ists" because this primal psychological state of (whole) being precedes the human subject's symbolization and symbolic existence. *Vis-à-vis* ex-istence, existence signifies the symbolic order in which the human subject is cut by language and bears the psychological lack. Lacan also talks about the language and desire of the dream ex-ists consciousness (see, for instance, "The Direction of the Treatment of the Principles of Its Power," *Écrits*, 253).

non-liquidate-ability of lack—the lack that is inherent in the onset of the human condition). However the deal is going to close at narrative end, narrative beginning, at its best, sets up a wish and kicks off a wish-fulfillment—it gets human desire on the road. Besides a reassessment of Propp’s and Greimas’ structuralist models, this chapter includes brief investigations into the narrative beginnings of Jane Austen’s *Emma* and Dr. Samuel Johnson’s philosophical novella *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* on the subjects of desire and lack.

In Chapter 2, I also devote a section (section v) to the relationship between (reading) narrative as objet petit a and (psychical formations of) readerly identification. I posit in that section three hypothetical modes of reading and respective readerly psychical cathexes to narratives: they are the *metamorphic*, *neurotic*, and *psychotic* acts or modes of reading. As examples, I refer to George Eliot’s heroine Maggie Tulliver (from *The Mill on the Floss*), Toni Morris’ child protagonist Pecola Breedlove (from *The Bluest Eye*), and Lacan’s own clinical patient Marguerite Pantaine (a.k.a. Aimée) and discuss, respectively, their *metaphoric*, *neurotic*, and *psychotic* modes or acts of reading.

Chapter 3 deals with the narrative middle and aims at reading the verbal (or discursive) function into the middles of narrative plots, be they monologic or dialogic (this chapter will offer their definitions drawn from Bakhtin). Now that the plot of a narrative kicks off, how does the middle work, and upon what does the middle operate and thereby work out its (centrifugal or centripetal) energies? Toward what does the middle orient? In other words, around what primes or on which basis do narrative actors/actants form significant relations to one another so as to forward the middle of a given plot and orient the narrative toward its end? To engage a discussion as such, this chapter will bring Lacan’s four discourses (of the Master, the University, the Hysteric,

and the Analyst) as a facilitating instrument into play. In this chapter I argue that narrative plots possess, carry along, and play out “discourses” of their own which may or may not be spoken out, narrated, or represented by narrative actants/characters. I model what I designate as the “discourses of plot” on Lacan’s four discourses and contend that the meaning and *orientation* of a narrative middle is based either on an acting-out of a particular plot discourse or on an interplay between at least two discourses as such. What I wish to achieve with the theory and model laid out in this chapter is an enriched understanding of the notion of plot (usually understood as the “what”—“what happens next, next, and next”—in narrative). With such primes as the subject, the o/Other, the objet petit a, knowledge, and truth of Lacan’s four discourses, I wish to illumine *what* happens in a given narrative middle as well as *why* the middle is driven forward in its own special fashion towards the end. In this chapter, I choose the following literary texts and situate my theory on plot discourses and orientations within their narrative contexts: Ovid’s story of Narcissus, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, and Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books.

Chapter 4 looks at narrative ends and examines the common parlance (emotive words such as “happy” and “tragic”/“sad”) and narratological vocabulary (e.g., “closure” and “anti-closure,” or, “open” and “closed” endings) customarily used to discourse about narrative endings. This chapter’s underlying argument is that such concepts, together with their locutions, *cannot* be all we have to or can say about narrative ends, especially about those that manifest a complex aesthetics of mixed affects or a multi-layered affectivity of aesthetics. In terms of such narrative endings, we need a new vocabulary. For this purpose, I will introduce the Lacanian notion of *jouissance* (again, briefly put here: pleasure-in-pain/suffering) to engage those narrative texts—fictional and theoretical alike—that display an ending which embraces a commingling of beauty and

horror/terror or of transgressive pleasure and painful anxiety. Furthermore, in order not to turn the word (and concept) of “jouissance” into another generic (and consequently vague and fuzzy) term like “happy” as in “happy endings,” I will map out *a multiplicity of jouissances* in which differently-oriented narratives can end, and I will base this multiplicity of jouissances at narrative ends on Lacan’s *Encore* seminar (in which he discourses about two distinctive types of jouissances, the phallic and the Other), as well as on the three Lacanian psychical orders (the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic). This postulate of a multiplicity of jouissances should be able to explain, if not wholly but at least in large part, *a difference in* pleasure or enjoyment or lack thereof in a given narrative ending. In this chapter I engage Sigmund Freud’s *Totem and Taboo*, Hélène Cixous’ essay “The Laugh of Medusa,” along with a number of Edgar Allan Poe’s grotesque and arabesque stories, and look into their differences in (rendering) affective enjoyments, including their narrative end-jouissances. As comparatively shorter exemplifications, I also bring up (some of them again from the earlier chapters but this time the focus is on their narrative endings): Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela*, George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss*, Shakespeare’s *King Lear*, Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, and Carroll’s *Alice* books.

Chapter 5, my last chapter and epilogue, makes the ending of my “narrative of narrative.” While this chapter recapitulates most of my grounding narratological arguments laid out in this project, I put forth a last claim (and future inquiry) about a transition in narrative from embracing the symbolic jouissance to the other jouissances. I bring in two new texts and shortly discuss them as further illustrations of this transition in narrative jouissances: they are Christopher Priest’s science fantasy novel *The Prestige* (1995) and Cormac McCarthy’s post-apocalyptic novel *The Road* (2006). In passing, I also briefly touch on the relationship between narrative, especially narrative

masterplots, and the cultural or epochal unconscious. There I reflect on (again rather briefly) the transcendentalist “masterplot” and Lord Alfred Tennyson’s Victorian master poem *In Memoriam*. Lastly, in teasing out and thinking about new emplotments in present-day narrative imagination and narrativity, I turn my gaze and meanwhile direct my readers’ at selected science fiction in print and in film. I end my project-long narratological inquiries with a discussion of Isaac Asimov’s novella *The Bicentennial Man*, Brian Aldiss’ short story “Supertoys Last All Summer Long,” Steven Spielberg’s 2001 sci-fi film *A. I.* (a re-visioning of Aldiss’ above-mentioned story), and the 2008 computer-animated sci-fi film *Wall-E*.

[IV]

Closing Remarks: Limitations and Future Possibilities

What I hope to achieve with this project is some fresh and significant bridging between narrative theory and (Lacanian) psychoanalytic theory. Of course, there is no lack of various “applications” of Lacanian theory to literary interpretations, or, intriguing studies of literature through the psychoanalytic lens—ranging, for instance, from those on Shakespearean dramas (including Lacan’s own interpretation of *Hamlet*, following and challenging Freud’s), to Edgar Allan Poe’s short stories (again, including Lacan’s own reading of “The Purloined Letter,” which, in return, prompted Derrida’s), and to the novel of all types and across all literary periods (some have invited more and others fewer Lacanian literary exegeses). There is also an important essay collection on “narration à la Lacan” edited by Robert Con Davis and entitled *Lacan and Narration: The Psychoanalytic Difference in Narrative Theory* (1983). In introducing this collection, Davis sees a *Lacanian narratology* most befitting to narratological inquiry, considering that, departing from Freud, Lacan maps the workings of the unconscious onto the level of language. And what is narrative but a configuration and structuration

(as well as betrayal) of linguistically “sliding” signifiers? The essays collected by Davis in *Lacan and Narration* tend to examine what narrative and narration are or mean *either* in Lacan’s own readings of literature *or* in applied Lacanian terms, including a Lacanian re-interpretation or re-assessment of certain narrative constituents such as the aphanisis (disappearance) of the narrative subject, the narrator’s voyeurism, temporality, etc. Significant and intriguing as they are, the essays, notwithstanding, have achieved in “adding” another theoretical perspective to narrative theory from *without*, rather than taking on the latter from *within*. Namely, they do not really engage, dialogue with, or even dialectize narratological conventions, contentions, frameworks, or underpinning vocabularies.

Hence, I hope this project will succeed in offering something more *and something else*. Instead of finding yet another pertinent area of study to which I “apply” Lacanian theory, I aim at looking into the narratological “tradition” and its discourse per se (particularly regarding narrative plot) and using Lacanian theory to rethink the existent narratological conversations and create, besides merely adding, something new. For instance, seeing that there is a narratological divide between plot-story and (narrative) discourse, I attempt to reinstate the discursive function and configuration in plot. Likewise, I find that the extant vocabulary with which we (readers as well as literary and narrative theorists) have used to discuss and apprehend narrative endings falls short of being comprehensive. Therefore, with the *aid* of Lacanian terms, I propose new tools with which we can make up for some of the (narratological) gaps and insufficiencies. I say (and will have to insist on saying) “some” because I believe (as perhaps we all do) that there is no such thing as “perfect theory.” Even with the instrumentality of another theory and its vocabulary, my project is unable to account for all narratological phenomena manifested in all narrative plots. For example, I use Lacan’s own discourse

theory to theorize about plot discourses (Chapter 3), yet the former consists of only four—albeit four “primary”—discursive configurations. Understandably, my theory of plot discourses will then entail its limit. Also, my postulation of narrative end-jouissances mainly addresses those narrative endings that exhibit a mixture of affects, or pleasure-in-pain/suffering (Chapter 4). It would not speak or answer for those other narratives that do not end with such a commingled affectivity. Nevertheless, it is my hope that what my project could bring to narrative theory on plot would ultimately outweigh what it can not encompass.

Again, my project inquires into the meaning of narrative in relation to human existence and the human condition on the global level and, on the local level, the workings of plot in narrative paralleling psychological dynamics. With more and more attention paid to the relation between the sciences (e.g., computer science, cognitive science, evolutionary science, etc.) and the art and craft of narrative within the field of narratology itself, this project looks back to the human interest and bespeaks an emplotment of human desire in narrative, narrativity, and the act of reading. The interesting question, whose inquiry is truly beyond the focus, scope, and mostly the objective of my current project, remains: how can new theoretical developments and recent scientific orientations in this field as above mentioned help shed light upon *narrative plot and plotting*? It would indeed be beneficial and intriguing if we could bring more discussion of the interconnectedness among the human mind, cognition, and narrative emplotment into dialogue.

But most of all, my simplest wish is to use this project to say and see that the studies of plot are not dead or have not reached their dead ends, even in postmodern eras which have continued to this day. As stated earlier, I wish to follow in Peter Brooks' footsteps

in rescuing the studies of plot from the discursive foci on narrative events/actions and the conceptual trappings of the story/discourse or fabula/syuzhet frameworks. I also wish to use this project not only to validate Brooks' contribution but, perhaps even more significantly, to challenge more studies on the relationship between textual and psychical dynamics to come. In a sense, my project is arguing that studies as such should not stop with "Freud's masterplot" (as Brooks has laid out for us in the fourth chapter of *Reading for the Plot*); in a sense, I am saying that "Freud's masterplot" is not enough in shedding light upon narrative desire hand in hand with human desire.

I do not wish to deny that my project belongs with those others that have attempted at teasing out a universal "map" or "key" for narratives on the whole; accordingly, I do not in this project limit my plot theory as well as my choice of literary examples to specific genres or "types" (albeit my readers may discover that a certain "type" or genre of narratives are likely to outrun the others). It is true that, while generic differences may or do matter to certain significant extent in view of a study on plot and narrative, it is, however, not my primary interest here. What I *am* interested in is thinking of narrative and plot in narrative in general and getting the conversation (in the field of plot studies) going. Of course, it is impossible within the scope of this project (or any project indeed) to engage all narratives, and my own theories on plot may work better for or make better sense of certain "types" of narratives than others. Therefore, I understand and anticipate my readers' naming of those narrative texts to which my theory as laid out here in this project would not "apply." I believe any such (inapplicable) text will eventually benefit one's own theory to grow and invite another's to arrive, such as the insufficiency in Brooks' project has prompted mine. As mentioned before, in pushing the expanded and still expanding notion of what narrative is or should be, I try to engage, albeit rather minimally due to the length of this project, Ovid's verse story of Narcissus, Dante's epic

poem *Divine Comedy*, the Shakespearean play of *King Lear*, Freud's and Cixous' theoretical texts, together with a couple of science fiction films, and discuss them as narratives. Still, I wish I could have devoted a section (of justifiable length) to poetry in this project as a way to test the limits and "applicability" of my own plot theory. But it cannot be done within the current scope and focus of my study at present. I will need to leave it to those who are interested in and more capable of dealing with such a genre. I also wish I could have used more postmodern narratives as illustrations of my own theories on plot as posited in this work because I *do* hope to see reinstatement of a discussion of plot in such narratives. Alas (!), a short project like this one seems never enough. Fortunately, there is always tomorrow, and the day after tomorrow. After all, very much like what I lay out in this project concerning the workings of narrative in general, it is *absence* or *insufficiency* that breeds desire and enables further emplotment and unraveling. I look forward to that the insufficiencies of this project could ultimately prompt more "narratives of narrative" to come.

Chapter Two: The Genesis of Plot

On October 22nd, 2004, Julia Kristeva was invited to the Graduate Center of the City University of New York to give a talk on “French Theory.” The distinguished guest did not launch into immediate theorization or any further abstraction of the towering and ever mysterious term, *French Theory*. Rather, Kristeva began with a narrative of her own, and the narration dated back to her “trauma” when she was not accepted into “the prestigious British school” because she “did not belong to the bourgeoisie” (to quote her own words). She continued to relate her first experience of France, later her adopted country, after she fled from communism in her native land of Bulgaria in 1966. She did not receive hospitality in France then, she said, unlike the hospitality America showed her during her visit to New York in 1973. Thus, (with a smile on her face), she addressed the audience by stating that she would like to be seen as “less French,” as “a coalition of different traditions,” instead. Then she moved on to the heart of the term, *French Theory*, and pointed out a way to look at it. She explained that “French theories are concerned with dealing with ways of freedom,” and, again, that “*French Theory* is just another term of expressing freedom.”

Like Kristeva’s statement on French theories, or (I would push her statement to argue this much) literary theories in general, narratives are themselves human terms of expressing the human subject’s undying desire and indefatigable search for freedom. Long preceding any literary theory, narratives exist and survive as testimonies of this human desire and struggle—for freedom against enclosure (in time and space), subjection (by Nature or other humans along the lines of gender, race, class, or the like), and, above all, chaos and the void of meaning. *Narratives are concerned with humankind’s desire for (finding) ways toward freedom.* To know, for instance,

provides the human subject (as s/he would like to believe) with one passage away from epistemological enclosure toward intellectual freedom, and to imagine supplies him/her with another avenue.¹⁹ Why do different cultures share the same need for narratives about the genesis of the universe and the world beyond, say, death, if humankind does not possess the same desire for freeing itself from *not knowing* (instead of remaining bound to fears of an unknowable, futile, or meaningless life)? Why do myths, among the most ancient forms of narrative, share similar patterns, if this cross-culturally repeated structure and structuration, as Claude Lévi-Strauss demonstrates, do not point to the same human desire for freedom from chaos and disorder? And do not religious narratives exist and function as ways through which humankind comes to master and thereby make meaning out of suffering, loss, and all that appears inexplicable? Do not dreams as narratives provide the occasions where the id may fulfill its wish for freeing itself from the grips of the superego? Going back to the personal narrative Julia Kristeva used to open her talk, does it not also reveal the speaker's desire for rendering herself free from being read and constructed (by the audience and the world at large) as one categorical and delimiting text bearing the illustrious name, *French Theory*?

Hence I argue that narratives concern first and foremost human dealings with ways (*not necessarily* promising or guaranteeing) of being free; they are expressions of the human subject's desire for as well as his/her (however pessimistic or optimistic, full or partial) apprehension of this loaded concept (freedom), which is crucial to the meaning of human existence. However, it is not enough to argue that narratives concern human

¹⁹ Pursuits of knowledge and exercises of imagination provide the human subject with *ways* of negotiating or appropriating freedom but by no means guarantee its procurement. As we all know, such endeavors may (and often) lead to the subject's (self-)imprisonment rather than freedom. For this reason, I have to lay stress on my phrasing here: namely, *without any guarantee, to know or to imagine is (at best) one or another human way that captures and manifests humankind's eternal striving for freedom*. Narrative plots that capture this human desire to know, together with its complications, will be discussed in later chapters, particularly in Chapter 3.

attempts to be free(d) from existential constraints and/or socio-political impositions (of ideological values, structures, and meaning), for, granted, there are master narratives that aim at (political and/or socio-cultural) subjection and dominance. I would like to further posit that *narratives capture the ways in which humankind desires freedom to desire* (accordingly, even those narratives that aim at subjection or dominance betray the master's desire for being free[d] of opposition or resurgence in order to desire a more centralized and consolidated order). Therefore, I do not mean to be tautological here. I understand that, in addition to "freedom," "desire" is another loaded term. For now we need to know that human desire operates in a counterintuitive manner.

Psychoanalytic theories have long pointed out that we humans never possess an unlimited freedom to desire our hearts' desire. Our desire, according to French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901-81), is always inscribed not only in the desire of the Other²⁰ but also in the law of this Other. In order to more fully apprehend the nature and operation of human desire (than what Brooks has engaged in *Reading for the Plot*), I devote the next two sections respectively to Sigmund Freud's and Jacques Lacan's theories on desire, pleasure, and other related concepts. This chapter will then proceed from the terrain of psychic dynamics to that of textual dynamics: a theory on narrative beginning in relation to the Lacanian notion of *lack* in the third section, the act of reading with a view to narrative functioning as *objet petit a* in the fifth section, and, in the fourth and last sections, a re-evaluation of structuralist narrative models as illustrations of the interconnectedness between psychic and textual dynamics.

²⁰ "Other," or "Autre," is habitually (and ritualistically) capitalized in Lacanian theory in order to be differentiated from the small o as in *objet petit a* (the small "autre"). The big O and the small o are both quintessential to Lacan's theory of human desire. Both will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

[I]

Freud and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

Peter Brooks bases his influential narrative study *Reading for the Plot* (1984) on Sigmund Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). What Brooks calls "narrative desire" is modeled on the post-Eros Freudian interpretation of human desire—namely, the desire *beyond* the pleasure principle, or, simply put, *the death instinct (or drive)*. Freud observed a manifestation of the death instinct in all living organisms and argues, henceforth, that the death instinct is in essence the aim of all such beings. (This theory of Freud's was highly controversial, especially around the time when it was first published and became known to the world.) More than half a decade later, Brooks took up Freud's theory of the death instinct and argues in his own narratological terms that it is what narrative, like any living organism, desires and strives for. Seeing the theoretical connection between Brooks and Freud, I believe we should backtrack a little and understand what, exactly, is *beyond* the pleasure principle. In other words, what is the death instinct, and what is the nature of human desire, *according to Freud?*

Beyond the Pleasure Principle was published after the First World War, both the brutality and aggressivity of which appalled Freud, a concerned father with all his three sons in the army, and confirmed the psychoanalyst's belief in human aggression being one of the "primitive, savage and evil impulses of mankind." As biographer Peter Gay points out, "[t]he great slaughter of 1914 to 1918, with stark truths about human savagery revealed in combat and in bellicose editorials, had also forced Freud to assign enhanced stature to aggression" (*Freud: A Life for Our Time* 395). Freud insisted over and over that the war "had not created the interest of psychoanalysis in aggression; rather, it had only confirmed what analysts had been saying about aggression all along" (Gay 396). By the time of the publication of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, the psychoanalytic

movement had been flourishing in Europe and Freud was on his way to become a household word. Yet, Freud's emphasis on aggression and death, or, on an *aggressive death drive*, in this slim but condensed volume astonished those who had been familiar with his earlier works, as well as those who had faith in a humanistic progression towards perfection. Not only did the book arouse the attention of the scientific world, but it also evoked controversy within its own field: "for most analysts Freud's idea of a hidden primitive urge toward death, of a primary masochism, was something else again. They saw it bedeviled by problems with the evidence, whether drawn from psychoanalysis or from biology" (Gay 402). Despite the much faulted speculative touch of his new theory about the human mind, his book proved to be quite popular, even to Freud's own surprise. For himself Freud felt that once he stepped into a vision of the mind being a battlefield for two eternally wrestling forces, Eros and Thanatos, he could never think otherwise. He recalled later, "[a]t the beginning, I advocated the views here put forward only tentatively, but in the course of time they have acquired such a power over me that I can no longer think differently" (qtd. in Gay 401-02).

Beyond the Pleasure Principle thus advanced Freud's theory of the human mind and pushed it to new ground. Not only had the mind been understood, thanks to his pre-war works, as being structured in a trio of the preconscious, the unconscious, and the conscious, but the ego is now said to operate with and be held sway by instinctual dualism, i.e. the life/sexual (or libidinal) and the death drives. There is, then, no longer a clear-cut divide between the operations of the id and those of the ego. Freud now attests, "[a] part of the ego, too, God knows how important a part of the ego, can be unconscious, is surely unconscious" (qtd. in Gay 412). Beyond the pleasure principle which is driven forward by life-preserving instincts is the death (and more conservative) drive that, as Brooks rightly quotes, tends backward towards "the restoration of an earlier [inorganic,

quiescent] state of things” (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 45). As Freud argues, the death instinct explained his patients’ compulsion to repeat, in particular, *Unlust*.²¹ And it is this death drive, as Brooks reasons, that answers for repetition (or the compulsion to repeat) in narrative plot and justifies the ultimate plot movement towards as well as narrative desire for the earlier inorganic and quiescent state of the pre-narrative and “the nonnarratable” (to use Brooks’ own phrase).

Nevertheless, I find that, in arguing about a narrative design and desire of returning to a quiescent end despite the compulsion to repeat in the narrative middle, Brooks underplays Freud’s original emphasis on the *aggressive* and even (*self-*)*destructive* aspect (and tendency) in the death instinct. Even the part of Brooks’ theory on repetition in the narrative middle, for instance, addresses more of the irrepressible nature of the unconscious (i.e., the repressed storied in the unconscious always returns) than the aggressive and (self-)destructive tendency of Freud’s death instinct/drive. In theorizing about the erotics and energetics of plot (the more its charged-up energies are delayed from an ultimate release in the middle, the more pleasure a final discharge at the narrative end engenders), Brooks unwittingly reverts to the notion of the *libidinal* (other than the *death*) drive and to the workings of pleasure as in the pleasure principle (see also my introduction). In the end, Brooks’ narrative theory is more about the pleasure principle than about that which exists *beyond* the pleasure principle. This leaves the

²¹ Gregory Zilboorg points out a general dissatisfaction of Freudian critics with the English translation of this German term, *eine/die Unlust*. He remarks (and meanwhile explains the true nature of *Unlust*): “the assiduous and faithful translators of Freud, in bringing before the English-speaking readers Freud’s version of the pleasure-pain theory, did not help matters when they coined a neologism, ‘unpleasure.’ This awkward term is supposed to render somewhat accurately the German term *Unlust*. It is not an exactly successful rendition (except etymologically, perhaps). The feeling of pain, of discomfort, of that disagreeable malaise which Freud has in mind is not perceived as *un-*pleasure, for what we feel in this malaise we feel positively, and not negatively as a lack of something else” (“Introduction,” *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, xxxiii). To stay faithful to the term and avoid further confusion, I decide to use *Unlust* as it is without any more translation and mediation.

energetics of plot and narrative desire to become and remain self-serving, self-preserving, and libidinally driven, hence unclear as to what narrative desire is really about: do plot, plotting, and reading for the plot fulfill narrative and the (reading) human subject's desires for asserting and preserving life by dint of satisfying the libidinal drive, or, for acting out the aggressively (self-)destructive nature of the death instinct? Where is the tendency of aggressivity and (self)-destructiveness in the death instinct in Brooks' model?

Moreover, both readings—Freud's reading of organic life per se and Brooks' reading of narrative as microcosm of the human psychical life—give rise to one weighty question which Freud himself raises in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: what, then, is the meaning of life? Freud writes, “[t]he hypothesis of self-preservative instincts, such as we attribute to all living beings, stands in marked opposition to the idea that instinctual life as a whole serves to bring about death. Seen in this light, the theoretical importance of the instincts of self-preservation, of self-assertion and of mastery greatly diminishes” (46-47). If, as Brooks illustrates, the nonnarratable existence, which, upon stimuli of some vague origin, turns into the narratable, aims merely at returning again to the nonnarratable, and if “[t]he desire of the text is ultimately the desire for the end, for that recognition which is the moment of the death of the reader in the text,” where, then, is “*la passion du sens*,” or in Brooks' own translation of Barthes, “the passion *for* meaning and the passion *of* meaning” (*Reading for the Plot* 108, 19)? Can it be that narrative's raison d'être is for providing an occasion on which readers get to discharge their instinctual (especially libidinal) energies and fulfill, not a will to power or to anything else, but a wish for “death”? And even if the end of narrative has to be read as fulfillment of the death drive, what kind of “death” is it? What is the nature of this death towards which narrative drives the human subject (reader and writer alike)? Is it only the erotic energetics that is met by this death—which is the “end” of all narratives? But I jump

ahead. Let us return to Freud and continue our investigation of the nature of human desire.

To Freud, human desire is *not* defined, shaped, and directed by drives only in their physiologic and organic sense, yet such is the way in which Brooks understands the workings of human desire and accordingly theorizes about the design and movement of narrative plot. Even for Freud himself, human desire is, generally speaking, outward-directed, namely directed towards an object outside one's self, and is, therefore significantly, a social phenomenon. In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), the work which crystallized the new drive theory laid out previously in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud emphasizes the dependent relation of the ego not only to the id but also to the superego. The id chooses its primal object, other than the self, and forms object-cathexis with the chosen object. Here, as he habitually does, Freud turns his attention to the *boy's* psychology as his prima exemplar: "At a very early age the little boy develops an object-cathexis for his mother, which originally related to the mother's breast and is the prototype of an object-choice on the anaclitic model; the boy deals with his father by identifying himself with him" (26-27). Freud further remarks that "[a]t the beginning, in the individual's primitive oral phase, object-cathexis and identification are no doubt indistinguishable from each other. [...]. The ego, which to begin with is still feeble, becomes aware of the object-cathexes, and either acquiesces in them or tries to fend them off by the process of repression" (23). It is then owing to the need of a sublimating process of the id, or, of human desire in its initially crude state of being, that the superego is differentiated from the ego and comes to take up an office of its own. The father of psychoanalysis makes it clear that for the little boy to function in any human society of Western civilization, the boy's desire will have to undergo a psychic transformation from the Oedipus complex to the castration complex—from an object-

cathexis with the mother and hostility towards the father as a rival to renunciation of the mother and identification with the father. Freud's pre-war works ranging from *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899) to *Totem and Taboo* (1913) all delineate human desire (the desires of Oedipus, Hamlet and the sons of the primal father, for instance) in a social context. His post-war works, as Peter Gay observes, bring his theory into play with even "far wider reference—a richly costumed historical drama" (414). In any event, human desire is a social phenomenon according to Freud, and, moreover, a social construct according to Lacan (whose theory of desire I will discuss in the next section of this chapter). If, as Freud himself points out, an individual "retains his libido in his ego and pays none of it out in object-cathexes," "the germ-cells themselves would behave in a completely 'narcissistic' fashion" (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 60). It is in this sense that Brooks' theory (however unwittingly) gives the operation of plot a *narcissistic* action and orientation because Brooks fails to situate narrative desire, together with human desire per se, in a *social* context that is far more complex than being simply autogenetic and autoerotic, or self-generating and self-satisfying.

In *The Ego and the Id* Freud embeds his discussion of the two classes of instincts, life/Eros and death/Thanatos, in the context of the entirety of the human mind. Here the ego is strong enough "to mediate between the world and the id, to make the id pliable to the world and, by means of its muscular activity, to make the world fall in with the wishes of the id" (58). In addition, the ego makes constant attempts at mediating the two instinctual forces, and Freud explains:

Towards the two classes of instincts the ego's attitude is not impartial. Through its work of identification and sublimation it gives the death instincts in the id assistance in gaining control over the libido, but in so doing it runs the risk of becoming the object of the death instincts and of itself perishing. In order to be

able to help in this way it has had itself to become filled with libido; it thus itself becomes the representatives of Eros and thenceforward desires to live and to be loved. (59)

Freud's own words prove that, drawn to both instincts, the ego still chooses Eros for its preservation. The will to live still, under normal circumstances, overpowers the will to die in one's own fashion (whereas the latter underpins Brooks' plot theory). This tendency of the ego should in a large part answer E. M. Forster's puzzle about the limited choices (pre-modern) narratives seem to adopt for their endings: "If it was not for death and marriage I do not know how the average novelist would conclude. Death and marriage are almost his only connection between his characters and his plot, and the reader is more ready to meet him here, and take a bookish view of them, provided they occur later on in the book" (*Aspects of the Novel* 95). If nothing else, marriage as one classic narrative ending should signify the triumph of the ego *as well as* the satisfaction of the id and a final discharge of pleasure. Marriage as one classic narrative ending is something Brooks' model does not investigate or account for. Albeit being out of fashion in modern or postmodern concerns, the phenomenon, especially considering the long tradition, of marriage as one favorite (pre-modern) narrative ending deserves an explanation beyond that which a narrative erotics and energetics can afford. I will resume my investigation of this phenomenon after I bring Jacques Lacan's theory into discussion.

[II]

Lacan and Human Desire

This may sound an exaggeration, but I do believe that there is no true understanding of human desire without understanding French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's theory about desire. Having seen the psychoanalytic practice of the IPA (the International

Psychoanalytical Association) deviate from Freud's insights and having been excommunicated from the IPA in 1963, Jacques Lacan embarked on his first public seminar (later published as *Les écrits techniques de Freud*) in 1953 in l'hôpital Sainte-Anne in Paris and proposed a "return to Freud."²² Despite his repeated emphasis that "[t]he meaning of a return to Freud is a return to Freud's meaning" ("The Freudian Thing" 110), Lacan continually revisited, elaborated, and evolved Freudian concepts in such a way that they grew to speak for a new way of understanding human psychic reality. It is thus *the Lacanian concept of desire* that I find the most revealing about narrative dynamics and the most useful for discussing the workings of plot.

The concept of desire constitutes a quintessential part of Lacan's central thesis about the human condition. To underscore its significance he made "the reality of desire" the object of psychoanalysis soon after the foundation of his own school, the EFP (l'Ecole freudienne de Paris), on June 21, 1964. According to biographer Elisabeth Roudinesco, "Lacan worked all summer at drawing up the statutes of his school" and he wrote a fourth text which was "circulated in the EFP on September 19, 1964, four days before the statutes were officially deposited." The text runs as follows:

"It is necessary to state," said Lacan, "how much rectification is required in this community if psychoanalysis is to preserve its essential character, which resides in an absolute object. That object is the reality of desire, and it has to be given scientific status. This can be achieved only by a discipline strong enough to eliminate the prejudices tending against it. A discipline exists only in the subjects trained by itself. The way a psychoanalyst sees his field is different from the way a psychologist sees his." (*Jacques Lacan* 310-11)

²² For details of Lacan's fight with the IPA, see Elisabeth Roudinesco's chapter, "The Symposium and the Storm," of her biography, *Jacques Lacan*, 244-59 (New York: Columbia UP, 1997).

Now with a school and disciples of his own, Lacan wanted to drive home the Freudian message that the true objective of psychoanalytic practice is to give back *freedom* to the analysand in order for the latter's unconscious desire to break the reins of the ego (and the superego).²³ In Lacan's mind and throughout his life, the concept of desire is inevitably entwined with that of freedom. Already in his discussion of Immanuel Kant vis-à-vis Marquis de Sade (1962), Lacan expounds on the interconnection of the two ideas:

If we consider the rights of man from the point of view of philosophy, the truth we see emerging about them is what everyone now knows. The rights of man boil down to the freedom to desire. Much good that does us, but it does allow us to recognize our recently acquired freedom to act on impulse and to confirm that this is indeed the only freedom for which a man dies. [...]. It's the freedom to desire that is a new factor, not the freedom to start a revolution. It's always for a desire that a man fights and dies, though it's the revolution that requires that his fight should be for the freedom of desire. (qtd. in Roudinesco 314)²⁴

Lacan's comment on the relation between human desire and freedom best explains my own argument about the *raison d'être* of narrative: narrative exists to keep alive our "freedom of desire"—our desire for "freedom to desire."

²³ In his article, "Kafka's Voices," which discusses Franz Kafka as one of Lacan's "silent partners," Mladen Dolar cites Kafka to support the notion of freedom as the purport of psychoanalysis: "*Es gibt wichtigere Dinge als die Kindheit*: this is one of Kafka's great sentences [...]. There are more important things than childhood: this should also be seen as the slogan of psychoanalysis, which indeed seems to be all about retrieving childhood, but not in order to keep this precious and unique thing, but to give it up. Psychoanalysis is on the side of the young dog who decides to grow up, to leave behind 'the blissful life of a young dog', to start his investigations, to turn to research, to pursue a quest" (*Lacan: The Silent Partners* 328). Towards the end of the same article, Dolar again cites Kafka and, following the cited passage, writes: "freedom is there [in Kafka's universe] at all times, everywhere, it is Kafka's *fin mot*, like the secret word one does not dare to utter although it is constantly on one's mind. [...]. And there is the slogan, the programme of a new science which would be able to treat it, to take it as its object, to pursue it, the ultimate science, the science of freedom. Kafka lacks the proper word for it, he cannot name it (this is 1922), but he only had to look around, to examine the ranks of his fellow Jewish Austrian compatriots. Psychoanalysis, of course" (Ibid. 333).

²⁴ This essay by Lacan is now available in the latest and expanded edition of *Écrits*, translated by Bruce Fink (New York: Norton, 2006), 645-68.

What is desire in the Lacanian sense? Central to Lacan's thesis about the human condition is his emphasis on the necessary differentiation among three concepts accompanying the human subject's three developmental stages: need, demand and desire. Dylan Evans well encapsulates Lacan's concepts:

Need is a purely biological INSTINCT, an appetite which emerges according to the requirements of the organism and which abates completely (even if only temporarily) when satisfied. The human subject, being born in a state of helplessness, is unable to satisfy its own needs, and hence depends on the Other to help it satisfy them. In order to get the Other's help, the infant must express its need vocally; need must be articulated in demand. The primitive demands of the infant may only be inarticulate screams, but they serve to bring the Other to minister to the infant's needs. However, the presence of the Other soon acquires an importance in itself, an importance that goes beyond the satisfaction of need, since this presence symbolizes the Other's love. Hence demand soon takes on a double function, serving both as an articulation of need and as a demand for love. Hence even after the needs which were articulated in demand have been satisfied, the other aspect of demand, the craving for love, remains unsatisfied, and this leftover is desire. "Desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but the difference that results from the subtraction of the first from the second" (E, 287). (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 37)

Thus, desire—a leftover and a surplus—is born out of the gap between need and demand. Unlike a need (of hunger, thirst, and the like), desire is in essence *unsatisfiable* and is associated not with instincts regarding their biological workings and ways of satisfaction, but with (partial) drives (*Trieb*s) that can only circle around their objects and never reach their aims (*Ziels*). Having devoted much of his 11th seminar to differentiating a drive from an instinct, Lacan notes that "[b]y snatching at its object, the drive learns in a

sense that this is precisely not the way it will be satisfied. For if one distinguishes, at the outset of the dialectic of the drive, [...]—it is precisely because no object of any *Not*, need, can satisfy the drive” (*Seminar XI* 167). Lacan takes the oral drive and its object (more precisely, *objet petit a*) for an instance:²⁵

As far as the oral drive is concerned, for example, it is obvious that it is not a question of food, nor of the memory of food, nor the echo of food, nor the mother’s care, but of something that is called the breast. [...]. To this breast in its function as object, *object a*, cause of desire [...]—we must give a function that will explain its place in the satisfaction of the drive. The best formula seems to me to be the following—that *la pulsion en fait le tour* [“the drive moves around the object”] (Ibid. 168).

Lacan names the concept of *objet petit a* (*a* for “autre”) and therewith helps define the nature of human desire as well as one’s relation to the desired Other. An *objet petit a* is, by Lacan’s definition, *not* an object with a substantial, independent, and complete entity of its own as in an object of one’s desire in common parlance. Rather, as Lacan reiterates, “this object ought to be conceived by us as the cause of desire” [Emphasis original] (*Seminar X* 87). *Objet petit a* operates as *cause* of desire because it reminds the human subject of his/her desired Other (such as the mother’s breast or a lover’s voice/gaze); it signifies a part and has a (partial) *semblance* of the desired Other. It takes the human subject to “the level of semblance (*dans le semblant*)” (*Seminar XX* 95)—a semblance of

²⁵ Dylan Evans points out that for Lacan, “the drives are partial, not in the sense that they are parts of a whole (a ‘genital drive’), but in the sense that they only represent sexuality partially; they do not represent the reproductive function of sexuality but only the dimension of enjoyment” (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 47). Furthermore, Lacan names four partial drives: the oral drive, the anal drive, the scopic drive and the invocatory drive. Each drive takes a respective object and has (and is located in) its own erogenous zone. For instance, while the oral drive’s object is the mother’s breast and its erogenous zone is located on the lips, the erogenous zone of the scopic drive is located in the eyes and this partial drive has *gaze* as its object.

appropriating and obtaining the desired Other by the instrumentality (or possession) of objet petit a. Yet, this obtainment or fulfillment of desire is illusory; hence, Lacan has attempted to associate objet petit a with the imaginary order. Albeit imaginary or illusory, objet petit a is quite a necessary to have, for it sustains and keeps alive human desire and takes the human subject to the level of *semblance*, fantasy, or wish-fulfillment, bypassing (or surpassing) sordid reality. And as I put forth in the introduction, narrative functions as objet petit a precisely on account of the latter's relation to and role in (supporting and configuring or reconfiguring) human desire and fantasy regarding the Other.

Objet petit a sustains and supports desire, but desire, according to Lacan, is illusory, too, in that “it is always addressed elsewhere, to a remainder, to a remainder constituted by the relationship of the subject to the Other who comes to substitute himself there” (*Seminar X* 218-19). Objet petit a reassures the human subject, in and as his or her fantasy, of the presence of the Other and thereby causes the subject to desire (the desire of) the Other, thus the famous Lacanian aphorism, “one's desire is the desire of the Other.” Take, for instance, the human infant's desire for the mother's breast as *l'objet petit a*. The mother's breast causes and sustains the infant's desire of the mother's desire for a sense (or *semblance*) of unity or wholeness. The mother's breast as *l'objet petit a* supports this fantasy of no lack or no split for both—i.e., a fantasy of the mother being in the child and vice versa. Lacan further argues that the desire of the child is in truth the desire of the mother, i.e., the phallus. What the child really desires is to be the phallus for the mother; s/he desires the desire of the m(O)ther.²⁶ Since, as Lacan puts forth, “the subject is constituted in the locus of the Other” (*Ibid.* 25), human desire is in this light

²⁶ Again, as explained in the introduction, when I parenthesize the letter “O” as in the term “m(O)ther” here, I mean not only “mother” but also, albeit implicitly, “mother” as “Other.”

neither biological nor mechanistic, neither subjective nor objective; it is, to use Lacan's own term, "objectal" and social (or relational). Both self and Other (as in child and mother) experience lack. The relation between self and Other is therefore mutually dependent with desire (or desiring) through an objet petit a as the link (the "umbilical cord") that connects the two.

The concept of objet petit a illumines the relation between human desire and the experience of lack that is inherent in the human subject—again, in both self and Other. Objet petit a causes and sets in motion the subject's unconscious desire for an encounter with *the real*, the first human psychical reality albeit the last of the three orders (the real, the imaginary and the symbolic) in the development of Lacanian theory. In *Seminar VII*, Lacan names the precursor of his later term, the real, as *das Ding* (the Thing); in his attempt to "return to Freud," Lacan explains that *das Ding* "is the mother, is also the object of incest, is a forbidden good" (70). However, I think it is important for us to keep in mind that the Lacanian notion of *the real* traverses beyond the human child's relation to the mother; or, in Freudian terms, the child's incestuous desire for (returning to or reuniting with) the mother. The Lacanian *real* signifies the pre-symbolic order of being wherein there is no (linguistic) cut or (conceptual *and* psychical) differentiation between self and Other. *The real* points to a state of being *whole*. Later in *Seminar X*, for instance, Lacan stresses that "there is no lack in the real"; that "the real is always full" (116, 167). Considering that, under normal circumstances, our first human experience of wholeness (non-lack and non-separation) is with the mother, the state/order of the Lacanian real—as I would like to argue—*can include yet ought not to be narrowly defined or understood as* the (biologically and psychically symbiotic) mother-child relationship. The real includes where the human subject-to-be experiences needs but no differentiation, split, or separation from, and thus no lack of, the mother. The mother in

the real order is not experienced as an Other, thus not written as mOther or m(O)ther. In the real, there is no sense of a divide between self and Other; all that is experienced is one non-differentiated blob existing in unison (so to speak). If the mother is desired, the mother is desired—only retrospectively—as the locus and reminder of the real once the human subject-to-be becomes a symbolized subject and moves from the real into the symbolic. To avoid seeing the Lacanian real as a (if not *the*) nostalgic turn in Lacanian theory, we should comprehend next the relation and distinction between the real and the symbolic.

Lacan emphasizes that the real is that which cannot be spoken or signified; it is beyond and, in fact, pre-exists the symbolic order, the latter being an order comprising linguistic signifiers and signification hand in hand with the linguistic and socio-cultural or political symbolization of the human subject. Upon acquiring language, which always signifies the language of the m(O)ther or that of the f(O)ther (or the language of some Other), the human subject turns into a split subject who now has to take into account the presence of this Other and therefore experiences an eternal alienation from the real. Lacan explains that “[t]here is no lack which is not of the symbolic order” (*Seminar X* 118). Lack has to be symbolized or signified (such as through language and socialization) in order to take form and thereby be apprehended. Lacan gives an example: “It is clear that a woman does not have a penis. But if you do not symbolize the penis as the essential element to have or not to have, she will know nothing of this privation. Lack for its part is symbolic” (Ibid. 118-19). Hence, while “privation is something real,” lack is experienced and articulated in the symbolic order as in the castration complex. Lack as *manque-à-être* (i.e., “want-to-be” [back with the desired Other in the real where there is no *Spaltung*]) is that which drives the human subject towards *objet petit a*, which symbolizes, reinstates, and reinforces desire for the real, or, in Lacan’s continual naming

attempt, “the impossible to say” (*l'impossible à dire*). Thus, the relationship among object petit a, desire, and lack connotes a circular movement for the human subject (his/her psychological workings): because of this *manque-à-être* experienced in the symbolic order, the subject is irresistibly drawn to an object petit a, the rem(a)inder and *semblance* of the desired Other, and suffers illusory satisfaction of desire, which in turn triggers more desire in the subject for a “real” encounter with the real. Yet, once there is a split, there is no going back. With the return to the real being impossible and this impossibility constituting a gap between the unconscious and consciousness, the subject clings all the more onto the imaginary objet petit a and attempts in vain to locate his or her desire in the symbolic with every possible signifier which leads not to the *unsignifiable* signified (the real) but to the production of yet another empty signifier of the signifying chain (alas, the Midas touch of language and signifiers!). This circular movement explains that the human subject does not experience psychic reality in a linear and static fashion which progresses from one order (e.g., the real) to the next (e.g., the symbolic). The workings of human desire in view of lack and objet petit a suggest the contrary: the human subject experiences a rather fluid and dynamic psychic reality, the three orders of which may interact upon one another and be experienced all together. As I noted in the introduction, narrative is one significant medium that allows the human subject to simultaneously experience different psychological realms.

Indeed, Lacan speaks about human *desire*, not simply *pleasure*, for he keeps pointing out that “[w]hat cannot fail to strike us right away is that his [Freud’s] pleasure principle is an inertia principle” (*Seminar VII* 27); and that “[p]leasure limits the scope of human possibility—the pleasure principle is a principle of homeostasis. Desire, on the other hand, finds its boundary, its strict relation, its limit, and it is in the relation to this limit that it is sustained as such, crossing the threshold imposed by the pleasure principle”

(*Seminar XI* 31). What sustains the subject of desire is not so much the object of desire; rather, “the subject sustains himself as desiring” (Ibid. 185) by means of *objet petit a*. Moreover, what lies behind desire and beyond the pleasure principle is *jouissance*, a supposedly primal and complete satisfaction.²⁷ Lacan himself unveils the relation between desire and *jouissance*: “The subject will realize that his desire is merely a vain detour with the aim of catching the *jouissance* of the other” (Ibid. 183). Unlike the pleasure principle, “a principle of homeostasis” as cited earlier, desire points to *jouissance* at the locus of the Other. In his *Ethics* seminar, Lacan brings to the fore his cogent arguments that, as far as the subject is concerned, *jouissance* is “only accessible to the Other” and that this peculiar mental reasoning perfectly explains *Lebensneid*, a special kind of jealousy “born in a subject in his relation to an other” (*Seminar VII* 237).²⁸ Dylan Evans helps locate this primal experience of *jouissance* that is only accessible to the Other at the locus of the mother. Evans explains:

The origin of this illusion of a superabundant *jouissance* accessible only to the Other is to be found in the very first experiences of the child, when the primordial Other, may seem to be complete, self-sufficient, and happy with herself independently of the child. Since this leaves no space for the child, the child attempts to inscribe a lack in the Other, by seeking to introduce, for example, a note of anxiety in the mother, perhaps by screaming or refusing to eat. [...]. Even then, the memory of the first impression of the mother’s complete *jouissance* will

²⁷ As Alan Sheridan remarks, “[t]here is no adequate translation in English of this word. ‘Enjoyment’ conveys the sense, contained in *jouissance*, of enjoyment of rights, of property, etc. Unfortunately, in modern English, the word has lost the sexual connotations it still retains in French. (*Jouir* is slang for ‘to come.’)” (“Translator’s Note,” *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 281). The word *jouissance* is therefore customarily retained in use without further translation, and this serves as a perfect example of *jouissance* escaping signification from one signifier to another in the symbolic order.

²⁸ Or “jealousissance”—another neological term coined and played with by Lacan in “Knowledge and Truth,” *Encore* (*Seminar XX* 100).

persist in the illusion of a superabundant *jouissance* accessible only to the Other.

(*Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 8-9)

Carmela Levy-Stokes brings the symbolic order into her discussion of the notion of *jouissance* and further elucidates Lacan's theory of desire in relation to the subject's primal experience:

The speaking being has to use the signifier, which comes from the Other. [...]. Complete *jouissance* is thus forbidden to the one who speaks, that is, to all speaking beings. This refers to a loss of *jouissance* which is a necessity for those who use language and are a product of language. This is a reference to castration, castration of *jouissance*, a lack of *jouissance* that is constituent of the subject. This loss of *jouissance* is a loss of the *jouissance* which is presumed to be possible with the Other, but which is, in fact, lost from the beginning. The myth of a primary experience of satisfaction is an illusion to cover the fact that all satisfaction is marked by a loss in relation to a supposed initial, complete satisfaction. The primary effect of the signifier is the repression of **the thing** where we suppose full *jouissance* to be. Once the signifier is there, *jouissance* is not there so completely.

[Emphasis original] (*A Compendium of Lacanian Terms* 103)

Unlike *jouissance*, desire is not only situated in the symbolic order. Desire also constitutes and thus is at the heart of the law of that order. Lacan states, "it is clear that what constitutes the substance of the law is the desire for the mother, that inversely what normatives desire itself, what situates it as desire, is what is called the law of the prohibition of incest" (*Seminar VII* 133). *Jouissance* is, on the other hand, beyond the law, the symbolic order, and the pleasure principle. The pleasure principle, which "follows from the principle of constancy," not only obstructs Unlust but also regulates the flow of pleasure or Lust, together with the level of excitement, in order that the

organism maintains homeostasis (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 6). Jouissance, however, knows no bounds. It has to be maximal and is therefore by nature *transgressive*. It transcends as well as transgresses the safe limits, by means of which the organism is able to remain comfortably constant and balanced (in contrast, keeping the intake of pleasure within bounds marks the function of the pleasure principle). Dylan Evans writes, “the result of transgressing the pleasure principle is not more pleasure, but pain, since there is only a certain amount of pleasure that the subject can bear. Beyond this limit, pleasure becomes pain, and this ‘painful pleasure’ is what Lacan calls *jouissance*; ‘*jouissance* is suffering’ (S7, 184)” (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 92). The desiring subject can at best *appropriate* the jouissance of the real. Without fail, the desiring subject attempts to get to the jouissance of the real but will never get it. This limit, hence insatiability, of desire is what motors the human subject to desire in the Sisyphean fashion. Desire, as Lacan puts it, “presents itself as a will to jouissance from whatever angle it appears” (*Seminar X* 133-34). The will to jouissance that transgresses human law is, according to Lacan, one telling difference among the psychotic, the pervert, and the neurotic: unlike the other two, the neurotic desires in accordance with the law.²⁹

Our understanding of the nature of human desire, concomitant with its relation to objet petit a, lack, and jouissance cannot be complete without bringing into discussion the element of anxiety. Again, Lacan returns to Freud, revisits the notion of anxiety, yet orients the concept in a new direction. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud defines

²⁹ On the basis of this difference between desire as constituent of human law and jouissance as transgressive of the law, Lacan spells out the difference between the pervert and the neurotic: “The will to jouissance in the pervert as in everyone else, is a will which fails, which encounters its own limit, its own restraint, in the very exercise as such of the perverse desire.” The neurotic, on the contrary, serves as the “exemplary path in the sense that he shows us, for his part, that it is by way of the search for, the establishment of the law itself that he needs to pass to give its status to his desire, to sustain his desire. The neurotic more than anybody else highlights this exemplary fact that he can only desire in accordance with the law” (*Seminar X* 134).

anxiety, vis-à-vis fear and fright, as “a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one” (11). Fear, on the other hand, “requires a definite object of which to be afraid” and fright is “the name we give to the state a person gets into when he has run into danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise” (Ibid.). In the same work we came to know the famous example of Freud’s eighteen-month old grandson little Ernst Wolfgang Halberstadt’s *fort-da* game as a way to master his anxiety over the absence of the mother. Freud describes the game in detail. The “good little boy” was on good terms with his parents and was “greatly attached to his mother, who had not only fed him herself but had also looked after him without any outside help” (13). Freud continues:

This good little boy, however, had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner, under the bed, and so on, so that hunting for his toys and picking them up was often quite a business. As he did this he gave vent to a loud, long-drawn-out “o-o-o-o,” accompanied by an expression of interest and satisfaction. His mother and the writer of the present account were agreed in thinking that this was not a mere interjection but represented the German word “*fort*” [“gone”]. I eventually realized that it was a game and that the only use he made of any of his toys was to play “gone” with them. One day I made an observation which confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive “o-o-o-o-.” He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful “*da*” [“there”]. This, then, was

the complete game—disappearance and return. (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 13-14)

Freud then interprets this peculiar phenomenon which gives rise to his observation of certain psychological truth:

At the outset he was in a *passive* situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was, as a game, he took on an *active* part. These efforts might be put down to an instinct for mastery that was acting independently of whether the memory was in itself pleasurable or not. But still another interpretation may be attempted. Throwing away the object so that it was “gone” might satisfy an impulse of the child’s, which was suppressed in his actual life, to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him. In that case it would have a defiant meaning: “All right, then, go away! I don’t need you. I’m sending you away myself.” (Ibid. 15)

In either case, the game signifies the way in which the child responds to the source of anxiety, namely the absence of the mother. Later in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), Freud repeats his argument:

When the infant has found out by experience that an external, perceptible object can put an end to the dangerous situation which is reminiscent of birth, the content of the danger it fears is displaced from the economic situation on to the condition which determined that situation, viz., the loss of object. It is the absence of the mother that is now the danger; and as soon as that danger arises the infant gives the signal of anxiety, before the dreaded economic situation has set in. (67)

As Dylan Evans points out, “Lacan, in his pre-war writings, relates anxiety primarily to the threat of fragmentation with which the subject is confronted in the mirror stage”

(*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 10).³⁰ But Lacan's discussion of anxiety takes on a new meaning, particularly when he devotes the (unpublished) seminar of 1962-3 to the topic of anxiety. In this seminar (*Seminar X*) Lacan clarifies in the first place that anxiety should not be understood as an emotion; rather, "it is an affect" (10). By affect he means that anxiety is not *repressed*: "What on the contrary I did say about affect is that it is not repressed; and that is something that Freud says just like me. It is unmoored, it goes with the drift. One finds it displaced, mad, inverted, metabolized, but it is not repressed. What is repressed are the signifiers which moor it" (Ibid.). Yet unlike Freud, Lacan argues that anxiety is "not without an object" (86). It turns out that *objet petit a* causes not only desire but also anxiety owing to the partial object's relation to lack. Whereas the absence of *objet petit a* reinstates and supports the subject's desire of the Other (of wanting to become the lack in the Other), the Other's ever presence becomes suffocating and thereby causes anxiety in the subject. Hence, Lacan departs from Freud's observation about the source of (the child's) anxiety in arguing that *presence* causes anxiety, while *absence* gives birth to and sustains desire:

[D]o you not know that it is not nostalgia for what is called the maternal womb which engenders anxiety, it is its imminence, it is everything that announces to us something which provokes anxiety? It is not, contrary to what is said, either the rhythm nor the alternation of the presence-absence of the mother. And what proves it is that the infant takes pleasure in repeating this game of presence and absence: *this possibility of absence is what gives presence its security*. What is most anxiety-provoking for the child is that precisely this relation of lack on which

³⁰ "The mirror stage" is one of the most important concepts in Lacanian theory *as well as in my own project*. I will discuss this term in greater detail, including its relation to narrative, in the fifth section of this chapter. Here in brief, "the mirror stage" refers to the crucial period during which the child, starting from six months old up to, as Lacan believes, the age of eighteen months, forms his subjectivity, or, in his own words, the *I* function, by assuming and internalizing a certain mirrored "imago." This mirror stage signifies a stage of identification and ego-formation for the child, and it functions to "establish a relationship between an organism and its reality—or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*" (*Écrits* 6).

he establishes himself, which makes him desire, *this relation is all the more disturbed when there is no possibility of lack*, when the mother is always on his back, and especially by wiping his bottom, the model of the demand, of the demand which cannot fail. [Emphasis mine] (*Seminar X* 44)

Lacan provides his seemingly paradoxical inversion of Freud's argument with more explanation: what in truth causes desire is the temptation installed by the possibility of absence. What causes anxiety, on the other hand, is "not the loss of the object, but precisely the presence of the fact that objects are not lacking"; what is feared is "always the 'it is not missing, ca ne manque pas'" [Emphasis original] (Ibid. 45). In other words, anxiety sets in when lack (as signified by objet petit a, which points to the Other) is not lacking.

As I have attempted to show in this section, Lacan takes Freud's investigation of human desire onto new levels and unveils its new relations—to lack, objet petit a, jouissance, anxiety, and the Other. The Lacanian notion of human desire bespeaks indeed not only a dynamics but a web of desire to boot. With this preliminary introduction to the web of Lacanian desire, I can now move to and make better sense of the relation between textual dynamics and psychical dynamics, between narrative desire and human desire.

[III]

Desire, Lack, and Narrative Beginning

It may not be a novelty to argue that narrative plot begins with "insufficiency." In his *Morphology of the Folktale* (first published in 1928 in Russian and translated thirty years later into English), Vladimir Propp extrapolates "insufficiency" as the "initial situation" of his Russian wondertale narratives (Propp's study will be discussed shortly

afterwards). In *Narrative and Its Discontents* (1981), D. A. Miller also courts the term “insufficiency” yet uses it in a different light. Rather than featuring “insufficiency” as a formal constituent of narrative beginning (as Propp does in his structural study of wondertales), Miller aligns what he considers as narrative insufficiency to the idea of “indecision,” particularly regarding a character’s (or a narrative’s own) inability to bring about or effect closure (7).³¹ It is “insufficiency” understood in this light that, according to Miller, gives rise to disequilibrium and suspense in the narrative middle (“Preface” ix). In this specific context, Miller regards “insufficiency” as one of the components upon which a narrative plot exerts its forward-going force (265).

I, on the other hand, would like to go back to Propp’s use of the term “insufficiency” yet further map it onto the psychical level. I argue that the beginning of narrative rests and is premised upon a psychical insufficiency, i.e., the Lacanian *lack*. That is to say, what is lacking in us human subjects prompts narrative beginnings to shape their formulations of insufficient scenarios. I therefore posit the human existential *lack* as that which causes the genesis of narrative plot. The human psychical *insufficiency* or *absence* (hole-ness) in the human condition generates and sustains desire *in* and *for* narrative. Narrative as *objet petit a* functions as the fantasy through which the subject comes to deal with the quintessential human experience of desire, lack, and anxiety. Out of desire, narrative is born. Yet desire points to lack at the same time; the notion of lack is, in truth, immanent in the notion of human desire. Hence, when I argue that out of desire narrative is born, narrative is born of lack to begin with. Because of lack, we continue desiring and sustain ourselves as *desiring subjects*. Because lack is inherent at

³¹ Miller gives an example of Harriet Smith’s “insufficiency” or “indecision” in the context of Jane Austen’s *Emma*: “Silly and unimportant as it is, Harriet’s indecision has the power to motivate a narrative episode. ‘Yes—no—yes’ is a structure of insufficiency, allowing for the articulation of a potentially endless series of oscillations. It is a basically open structure, infinitely expandable, and one could imagine even greater play given to it than the text is in fact willing to tolerate” (*Narrative and Its Discontents* 7).

the onset of our human existence, we keep narrating about our desire for that which is lacking in us, hoping that, through language, narrative, and signification, we would be able to articulate and signify that which is lacking, insufficient, or absent.

Take *Emma*, for instance. The famous opening paragraph suggests to the reader that there *seems* nothing lacking in Emma's life, considering "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence, and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her" (27). Margaret Drabble has incisively remarked that the narrative "opens with great panache, with one of those great first sentences that seems so effortless that it almost deludes one into thinking one could do it oneself [...]. The gauntlet thrown down in that word *seemed* is picked up at once by the attentive reader. Trouble is in store for the happy and comfortable Emma. As storytelling, it is magnificent" [*Italics original*] ("Introduction" vii). But the ruling question about Austen's narrative remains still: *what does Emma want*, while she *seems* to have almost no wants (e.g., home, wealth, beauty, intelligence, independence, and admiration from those around her)?

Of course, we all know that Emma wants to marry Harriet Smith off—to Mr. Elton, the new vicar in the self-satisfying rural world of Highbury. Some readers might argue that Emma wants to be continually flattered and held up as *the* apple in the eyes of her community, for all her vanity's sake. Yet a little more into the beginning of the narrative we find that Emma does lack something in her almost-perfect life, or, shall I say, there is lack within her—lack in the Lacanian sense. The fact is: Emma has experienced in her life continual separation from the beloved Other—separation not only physically but, more importantly, psychically speaking. The second opening paragraph tells that Emma

lost her mother “too long ago for her to have more than an indistinct remembrance of her caresses” (28). Albeit a mother’s absence was soon filled up with Miss Taylor’s presence in Emma’s life (as the rest of the second opening paragraph tells), Austen plays and repeats the *fort/da* game with her plotting of the *absence/presence* of the Other in her heroine’s existence. Shortly afterwards in the fifth opening paragraph, we learn that Emma’s separation from Miss Taylor, owing to the latter’s marriage to Mr. Weston, brings grief and sorrow into the heroine’s life. She is now poignantly aware of the distance between her self and the desired Other (Miss Taylor). Thus, within the short narrative space of only a couple of opening paragraphs, we feel, even fear, that there is the Lacanian lack and a desire for the real in Emma.

This takes us, at this point, to Emma’s notorious match-making. Match-making is, in truth, the tool with which Emma, like Freud’s grandson, uses to master, on her own terms, the *fort/da* game as well as the resulting anxiety over the dialectic between *absence (fort)* and *presence (da)* of the desired Other. With the real being the impossible state for a human subject’s symbolized existence, Emma appropriates the real—the state of wholeness which knows no cut, no separation, no lack—*by way of match-making*. In other words, by bringing two people who suit her liking or fancy to unite in marriage of the symbolic order and rejoicing in her secular acts of uniting (or emotional binding), Emma is then able to experience, *vicariously*, the jouissance of the real (the primal and ultimate satisfaction of non-separation). Let us not forget that Emma’s motives for promoting a marital union between Harriet Smith and Mr. Elton do not all concern a selfless wish for her devotee’s class advancement and societal validation. The heroine’s most self-betraying motive lies in her facilitating Harriet’s position in “good society” by the instrumentality of a marriage to Mr. Elton so that they—*Harriet and Emma*—will not be separated by their class difference (such would be the case had

Harriet accepted Robert Martin's hand in marriage, as Emma makes it very clear to poor Miss Smith). Also curiously, right after Harriet finally comes to make up her mind about not accepting Robert Martin, Emma bursts into *thanking* Harriet—"Thank you, thank you, my own sweet little friend. *We will not be parted*. A woman is not to marry a man merely because she is asked or because he is attached to her and can write a tolerable letter" [Emphasis added] (67). Whether or not we (should) read the above-mentioned scenes as those Austenian scenes that unveil a homosocial or homoerotic relationship between two women, or, as scenes wherein the author emphasizes the importance of women's non serviam attitude towards men's first requests/demands, we do see that separation from the Other causes great anxiety in Emma, which in turn fuels her *real* desire for appropriating the real of a non-split being (between self and Other) via match-making.

As argued, separation from the (beloved) Other causes anxiety right at the beginning of Austen's narrative. Like his daughter, Mr. Woodhouse experiences an acute sense of loss, anxiety, and Unlust due to Miss Taylor's marriage and separation from them; Mr. Woodhouse also clings onto the state of the real. The fact that he can never cease addressing and conceptualizing Mrs. Weston as "Miss Taylor" (prior to the cut, socially and psychically speaking) reveals the old valetudinarian's disavowal of the cut between "Mrs. Weston" and the Woodhouse household. Unlike Emma, Mr. Woodhouse is unable to redirect his melancholy and transform it into positive (or constructive) energies such as Emma does with her match-making enthusiasm and mechanism. Hence, the beginning of Austen's narrative sees Mr. Woodhouse wallowing in his own anxiety in the form of valetudinarian concerns, and, as Freud informs us in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), melancholy is a manifestation (mechanism) of narcissistic self-defense and withdrawal in the face of loss.

However, even successful match-making cannot rid Emma of the anxiety over the irrevocable split between her self and the desired Other. Austen's narrative beginning unveils that, even when Emma marries off her friends (e.g., the Westons) and thereby will not be parted from them for good, there is and will remain a psychical distance between them: "How was she to bear the change? It was true that her friend was going only half a mile from them; but Emma was aware that great must be the difference between a Mrs. Weston only half a mile from them and a Miss Taylor in the house" (28). This is indeed painful recognition for Emma. With a dead mother and a valetudinarian father, a "Miss Taylor in the house" is the absence, the hole, in Emma's life and existence vicariously filled; a "Miss Taylor in the house" is a part of Emma—a part of the latter's psychical makeup. A "Mrs. Weston" belongs to someone else. Match-making may have enabled Emma to keep her friends close (again, the notion of *da*), but, as Emma realizes, there is and will remain a cut from the real in her symbolized existence which even vicarious (marital) unions she has helped anchored within the symbolic order (of Highbury) cannot undo. To move on within the symbolic order without fixating her desire on a return *to* the real (which is the impossible), Emma needs to learn and, in fact, she does eventually learn to let go of her desire for approximating the real—via the agency of her match-making.³² Accordingly, the novel's beginning with Emma deep in contemplation of Miss Taylor's marriage—the success she has achieved hand in hand with her mourning for the loss of the beloved Other—is immanently fraught with absence and lack, desire and anxiety. And it is the absence of the newly married Mrs. Weston from the Woodhouse household at the outset of the narrative that causes Emma's desire for one more match-making, and this allegedly "last" match-making business concerning

³² There is a continued small discussion particularly of Emma's symbolic jouissance at the narrative end in Chapter 4.

Mr. Elton and Harriet Smith does significantly help drive Emma's/*Emma's* plot to grow and unfold.

While absence and lack get desire and narrative going, the lacking of lack—the lack of the omnipresent (hence overwhelming) Other's *absence* as Lacan pinpoints in his Anxiety seminar—gives rise to anxiety rather than desire: the mOther's omnipresence at the back of a child, as already cited in the last section, not only causes the child great anxiety but fast kills the child's desire for the mOther to boot. If (proper) distance is the key to—and beauty of—an ever-desirable human relationship between self and Other, it is precisely because a respected and observed distance nourishes human desire. Likewise (and generally speaking), an enveloping presence of the Other will not set a narrative plot in motion; it will bring about narrative inertia instead.

Dr. Samuel Johnson's 1759 philosophical novella *Rasselas* illustrates another intriguing intersection among human desire, lack, and anxiety at its narrative beginning. Like the seemingly lack-less opening of *Emma*, the beginning of *Rasselas* sets up a world in which, as far as the inhabitants of the happy valley are concerned, nothing seems to be lacking. But soon we find out that Prince Rasselas is far from being happy and content (and much more consciously so than Emma). Something does distress or vex the young prince; he intuits that something in him cannot be signified and satisfied by all the things that exist or are made available to him inside the happy valley, but at the same time the unhappy prince cannot nail or name it (i.e., *ce que manque*). Without Prince Rasselas's desire and anxiety to find out about what is lacking in him in order that he could repossess happiness and enjoyment at the beginning of Johnson's narrative, the reader would not have had the hero's subsequent travels outside the happy valley, his discourses with fellow men on happiness, misery, society, and civilization; and, most importantly,

the reader would not have had the narrative life of such an enduring literary testimony on the human condition and desire.

The beginning of Johnson's narrative seems not so much concerned with the omnipresence of a named Other as with the omnipresence of "pleasure" itself. Nevertheless, let us not forget that all the pleasure or devices for arousing and sustaining pleasure within the happy valley are *provided* for its inhabitants by the Other who commands and even demands "Enjoy!". The opening second chapter reads:

Here the sons and daughters of Abissinia lived only to know the soft vicissitudes of pleasure and repose, attended by all that were skilful to delight, and gratified with whatever the sense can enjoy. They wandered in gardens of fragrance, and slept in fortresses of security. Every art was practised to make them pleased with their own condition. The sages who instructed them of nothing but the miseries of publick [sic] life, and described all beyond the mountains as regions of calamity, where discord was always raging, and where man preyed upon man.

To heighten their opinion of their own felicity, they were daily entertained with songs, the subject of which was the *happy valley*. Their appetites were excited by frequent enumerations of different enjoyments, and revelry and merriment was the business of every hour from the dawn of morning to the closing of even. (4)

The authorities of the happy valley make sure that its noble youths feel no lack within their human existence. All needs and wants are attended to and fulfilled by all means made available to its inhabitants, whose existence is thereby rendered passive (note the passive voice in the above-quoted passages). The notion of lack, or lacking something fundamental to a supposedly happy and content human existence, is tossed beyond the borders of the valley and aligned with or relegated to the foreign(er) and the outside(r).

Ironically, it is the omnipresence of all-enjoyments, all-pleasure, and all-happy-valley that paralyzes and causes Prince Rasselas's misery, discontent, and his following contemplation of the difference between human existence and animal life:

“What,” said he, “makes the difference between man and all the rest of the animal creation? Every beast that strays beside me has the same corporal necessities with myself; he is hungry and crops the grass, he is thirsty and drinks the stream, his thirst and hunger are appeased, he is satisfied and sleeps; he rises again and is hungry, he is again fed and is at rest. I am hungry and thirsty like him, but when thirst and hunger cease I am not at rest; I am, like him, pained with want, but am not, like him, satisfied with fullness. [...]. Man has surely some latent sense for which this place affords no gratification, or he has some desires distinct from sense which must be satisfied before he can be happy.” (6-7)

Significantly, here Prince Rasselas (or, shall we say, Johnson the implied author himself) hints at the gap between need/want and desire. Johnson's hero comes close to intuiting that desire, together with *desiring*, is what distinguishes the existence of humans from that of animals.

Prince Rasselas experiences inertia at the narrative beginning as enclosure. Being subject to the Other's ever-present command/demand of “Enjoy!” is anxiety-provoking. Luckily, the prince does not wish to remain in this quiescent state of being; he desires to break out of enclosure owing to the omnipresence of all enjoyments. The young hero finally discloses the cause of his misery to his old mentor, “I fly from pleasure because pleasure has ceased to please; I am lonely because I am miserable, and am unwilling to cloud with my presence the happiness of others” (7). The old mentor replies, not without much bewilderment and disagreement: “You, Sir, are the first who has complained of the misery in the *happy valley*. I hope to convince you that your complaints have no real

cause. You are here in full possession of all that the emperour of Abissinia can bestow [...]. Look around and tell me which of your wants is without supply: if you want nothing, how are you unhappy?” [Italics original] (Ibid.). Note here the old mentor’s use of the term “want(s),” for shortly afterwards Prince Rasselas (or Johnson the implied author himself) astutely points out, again, the gap between “want” and “desire”:

That I want nothing, or that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint; if I had any known want, I should have a certain wish; that wish would excite endeavour, and I should not then repine to see the sun move so slowly towards the western mountain, or lament when the day breaks and sleep will no longer hide me from myself. When I see the kids and the lambs chasing one another, I fancy that I should be happy if I had something to persue [sic]. But, possessing all that I can want, I find one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former. [...]. *I have already enjoyed too much; give me something to desire.* [Emphasis added] (8)

Here, already at the beginning of the narrative, Prince Rasselas reveals anxiety about his inability to continue living as a *desiring human subject*; the omnipresence of all things and devices that aim at providing pleasure and satisfaction of needs (or in Johnson’s own word, “wants”) brings about the young hero’s anxiety and inertia at the narrative beginning. Such (omnipresence of pleasure and satisfaction of needs) can be said about the workings of narratives on the whole: *omnipresence, or lacking of lack, will cause plot inertia and narrative anxiety rather than desire.* Moreover, bound by the happy valley’s implicit injunction, “*Enjoy!*”, the hero is portrayed more as a prisoner than a privileged human subject who, when given all (things), would supposedly possess all freedom to enjoy (and, by extension, all happiness). The omnipresence of all enjoyments within the happy valley may have endowed Prince Rasselas with all the freedom to choose (whichever that could satisfy his needs and wants), but all enjoyments do not in

the least result in or contribute to the prince's freedom *to desire*. It is hence the prince's *desire for freedom to desire* that underlies the narrative logic of Johnson's novella and that distinguishes Prince Rasselas from the other princes and princesses. Had Prince Rasselas remained for good in the happy valley like the rest of the princes and princesses, not only his *human* existence but his narrative (or the narrative about him) would also come to a premature end. Without his desire for freedom *to desire*, Prince Rasselas would have sunk into an organic, animalistic state of being and would not have had a developing story of his own.

When a narrative begins with an overpowering, haunting omnipresence (of something or someone), it is the desire for its disappearance or "lack" that sets off the plot. This is where transgression in plot comes in and serves a narrative purpose: when a story seems to begin with its hero or heroine's *transgression* of an interdiction or law as in the "No!" of the f/FOther (*le Non du Père*),³³ there is first and foremost the protagonist's (and the text's) anxiety over the Other's paralyzing omnipresence and hence a desire for the Other's lack or absence—a desire for freedom to desire on one's own, free of an everlasting "No!" of the Other. If Crusoe had not transgressed the "No!" of his father to a seafaring life, we would never have had the narrative life and subsequent adventures of *Robinson Crusoe*; if Captain Robert Walton had not transgressed "[his] father's dying injunction [which] had forbidden my uncle to allow me to embark in a sea-faring life" (*Frankenstein* 8), he would not have had encountered Victor Frankenstein during his expedition to the North Pole and produced a full-bodied travel narrative for his sister in England and us readers. While lack or absence does not necessarily entail transgression in a narrative plot, transgression needs be understood as being preceded by a desire for

³³ What I mean by this locution, f/FOther, refers either to father as Other or God the Father as Other (or both). My readers can refer back to my introduction (towards the end of section ii) where I give out explanations for similar locutions used in this project.

absence or lack.³⁴ In any case, something or someone has to be lacking (or a desire for lack) in order for narrative plot to take off, just as lack exists at the onset of the human condition for the human subject to remain a lifetime subject of desire, hence his/her eternal search for that which may be signified and acquired in the symbolic order. It is the psychological absence or lack that gets human desire on the road.

[IV]

Propp and *Morphology of the Folktale*

When Vladimir Propp published his structural study of one hundred Russian wondertales in 1928, translated thirty years later as *Morphology of the Folktale*,³⁵ he unwittingly discovered some invaluable psychological truth manifested by his narrative-materials. At one point, Propp hints at a curious relation between the human psyche and the structure and structuration of the narratives: he notes, “it is possible to assume that the basic, vivid moments of our essentially very simple scheme also play the psychological role of a kind of root” (112). The tales illustrate one common “initial situation,” as Propp names the beginning of the wondertale narratives. This “initial situation,” premised upon and consisting in *absence*, is listed as follows: “I. ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF A FAMILY ABSENTS HIMSELF FROM HOME. (Definition: *absentation*. Designation: β)” [Italics original] (26). Propp provides three examples of

³⁴ This—the complex relationship among human desire, transgression and the Law—is the point of Lacan’s Seminar VII, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (1959–60). This relationship points to one thing, namely the real as *das Ding*, the Thing, which lies “at the heart of man’s destiny” yet meanwhile beyond the Law (97). The Law is *not* the Thing; it is, according to Lacan, the means by which we get to know about the Thing. And yet, as Lacan puts it, “I would not have had the idea to covet it if the Law hadn’t said: ‘Thou shalt not covet it’” (83). The more the Law inscribes and forbids, the more we desire and are prone to transgress. It is all because of the real as *das Ding*, the Thing, which we try hard to get at and get back to. Therefore, the notion of human transgression already entails the reality of the absence or lack of the real as *das Ding*.

³⁵ Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson explains that this delay was due to the formalist trend which, by the time of Propp’s publication in 1928, was “already in a state of crisis in Russia” (“Introduction,” *Morphology of the Folktale* xxi). Although “it was neither translated outside of Russia, nor were its tenets ever discussed in an international forum,” it, however, exerted some influence (on Claude Lévi-Strauss, for instance).

the genesis of the wondertale plot: either “[t]he person absenting himself can be a member of the older generation [such as, ‘Parents leave for work’]”; or, “[a]n intensified form of absentation is represented by the death of parents”; or, “[s]ometimes members of the younger generation absent themselves [such as, ‘They go visiting, fishing, for a walk, out to gather berries’]” (Ibid.). Pages later, the Russian folklorist admits, “we can observe that these tales proceed from a certain situation of insufficiency or lack, and it is this that leads to quests analogous to those in the case of villainy. We conclude from this that lack can be considered as the morphological equivalent of seizure, for example” (34).

Propp further explains:

[A] tale, while omitting villainy, very often begins directly with a lack: Iván desires to have a magic saber or a magic steed, etc. Insufficiency, just as seizure, determines the next point of the complication: Iván sets out on a quest. The same may be said about the abduction of a bride as about the simple lack of a bride. [...]. In the first instance, a lack is created from without; in the second, it is realized from within. (35)

Most interestingly, Propp apologizes soon after the above-quoted passage for the use of such words as “lack (*nedostáča*)” and “insufficiency (*nexvátka*)” to express his meaning. He understands that such words may not be “wholly satisfactory” (Ibid.). I, on the contrary, was struck by his choice of such psychologically loaded locutions, especially the English equivalents used by the translator, Laurence Scott. The two terms, *lack* and *insufficiency*, chosen for Propp’s work tellingly point to the Lacanian notion of lack when we come to discuss the genesis of plot. If Freud is all right about the unconscious, Lacan about human desire, and Lévi-Strauss about the relation between narrative (myths included) and the unconscious human desire (for order and meaning), then I argue that, despite their limited number, Propp’s samples exemplify a structure of narrative that

begins not only with a mysterious *tick* (left unaccounted for in Kermode's model) but, more significantly, with *lack* and *absence*, which, particularly based on Lacanian premises, could, to a large extent, be psychologically fathomed.

Of course, Propp's notion of lack differs from the Lacanian lack, the latter of which points to *the real*. In Propp's model, the initial misfortune or lack *can* be "liquidated," and liquidation as such bespeaks one crucial function of the *dramatis personae*, designated as "K" ("The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated"); Propp announces: "[t]he narrative reaches its peak in this function" (*Morphology of the Folktale* 55). It is worth remarking that the object of the initial lack in Propp's model is the object of desire. Such a lack can be "liquidated" when, for instance, the object of a search or quest is obtained. I argue that this *liquidate-ability* of an initial lack is precisely that which makes and completes a so-called "fairy tale." A lack of a foreign or abducted bride, a magic saber or steed functions as an object of the hero or heroine's desire; the object of one's desire can be acquired and its lack liquidated at a fairy/folk/wonder tale's end. Yet *the lack* that is inherent and immanent in the human condition can never be "liquidated."

There is no such thing as liquidation of the human psychological lack; liquidation of lack as such is and remains an existential impossibility. We as readers may feel satiated when the object of (the hero's or heroine's) desire is acquired and such lack liquidated yet meanwhile remain acutely aware of having fallen into the trap of a "fairy tale." If we gain any satisfaction in reading such tales, this satisfaction can only be of a temporary and ephemeral nature because we can never quench our desire for something deeper, something more fundamental, something we fear may never be "liquidated" or realized, hence something we keep looking for from narrative to narrative, from one signifier in the symbolic or one fantasy in the imaginary to another. This is not to say that fairy-tale-

like narratives shall lose their literary and aesthetic values, for they, like any other types of narratives, function first and foremost as *objets petit a*, the causes of our (readerly or writerly) desire. They send us on a quest for that which we hope could be symbolized and eventually acquired as in objects of desire and, with their obtainment, liquidation of our psychical lack. Hence, no matter whether it be the lack of a bride, a magic saber or steed, *the lack from within the human subject*—writer and reader alike—at the onset of the human condition sets narrative and desire in motion. This inexhaustibility of human desire for “liquidation” of the psychical lack truly explains the genesis of plot and the *raison d’être* of narrative. In short, we desire *metonymically* through narrative, fairy- and folktales included, if not to begin with.

[V]

The Act of Reading: Psychical Formation and (over-)Identification

Narratives mirror the human subject’s continual desire for the freedom of and to desire. I use the word “mirror” in specific reference to another quintessential Lacanian concept, “the mirror stage” (*le stade du miroir*).³⁶ Deriving his idea from French psychologist (and his friend) Henri Wallon’s “the mirror test,”³⁷ Lacan sees this stage as a

³⁶ Dylan Evans writes: “[t]he mirror stage (also translated in English as ‘the looking-glass phase’) was the subject of Lacan’s first official contribution to psychoanalytic theory, when he propounded the concept to the Fourteenth International Psychoanalytical Congress at Marienbad in 1936. From this point on, the mirror stage forms a constant point of reference throughout Lacan’s entire work” (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 114).

³⁷ Elizabeth Roudinesco, being critical of Lacan’s self-assertion over the originality of his idea, puts forth the transformation of this Lacanian term, *the mirror stage*, from Henri Wallon’s “mirror test,” and she explains: “Wallon subscribed to the Darwinian idea that the individual turned into a subject through the succeeding stages of a natural dialectic. In the context of this transformation, during which the child has to resolve its conflicts, the so-called mirror ordeal is a rite of passage that takes place between the ages of six and eight months. [...]. Lacan transforms this experience into a stage, i.e., a position in the Kleinian sense, without any reference to a natural dialectic that allows the subject to unify its functions. This being so, the *mirror stage* no longer bears any resemblance to either a mirror or a stage (in the developmental sense), or indeed to any concrete experience. It becomes a psychological, even an ontological operation, by which a human being comes to exist as such by identifying with his *semblable*—his likeness, fellow, or ‘neighbor’—when as an infant he sees his own image in a mirror. And so the *mirror stage* in the Lacanian

critical period during which the human subject, especially the child subject, forms and structures his/her subjectivity. At the mirror stage, the subject experiences self-alienation as well as self-identification.³⁸ Narratives, I argue, function as numerous metaphoric mirrors into which we look, continually seeking that which evades us—some specular images of ourselves, be they fragmented or ideal. I call this “looking” the *metaphoric* act of reading, with the word “metaphoric” being used here not only in its literary sense but also as a psychoanalytic trope.³⁹

In challenging and deconstructing Saussure’s linguistic model particularly of the correspondence between the signifier and the signified, Lacan emphasizes that one should also take metonym and metaphor into consideration when speaking of the linguistic signifying chain in its comprehensive scope (see his article “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious; *Écrits* 148). Lacan remarks:

sense is a matrix foreshadowing the evolution of the ego as imaginary” (*Jacques Lacan* 111-12).

³⁸ The feeling of alienation from self results from the incongruity the child experiences when he looks into the mirror and finds his specular image *whole*, while the incoordination of his body tells him something quite different, something *fragmented* and not operating as a whole. Furthermore, though captivated by the specular image he sees in the mirror, the child at first experiences that image as a rival (something outside himself). To resolve this tension of a split, the child then learns to claim that image to be his self and identifies with it as his ideal ego, an imaginary self-image of unity and even perfection.

³⁹ Freud names two operations of the dream-work in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899): “*Dream-displacement and dream-condensation* are the two craftsmen to whom we may chiefly ascribe the structure of the dream” (199). By *condensation*, Freud means that, during the dream-formation, the bulk of the dream-thoughts are condensed and packed into laconic units of the dream-contents. The dream-speech, for instance, often undergoes the process of condensation. The operation of *dream-displacement* involves a displacing, and on many occasions distorting, processing of the dream-thoughts. Sometimes, as Freud points out, “the essential content of the dream-thoughts need not be represented at all in the dream. The dream is, as it were, *centred elsewhere*” (Ibid. 196). Arguing that the unconscious is structured like language, Lacan follows the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson and links the two mechanisms of the dream-work, condensation and displacement, respectively to *metaphor* and *metonymy*. Accordingly to Lacan, *metaphor* is a structure of substitution and thus identification in which one signifier may be substituted for another signifier. Lacan links displacement to *metonymy* which, as Dylan Evans puts it, “concerns the ways in which signifiers can be combined/linked in a single signifying chain (‘horizontal’ relations), whereas metaphor concerns the ways in which a signifier in one signifying chain may be substituted for a signifier in another chain (‘vertical’ relations)” (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 113). For a brief discussion of the differences between Lacan’s notions of the two tropes and those of Jakobson, see also Evans’ *Introductory Dictionary*, 111-14.

Metaphor's creative spark does not spring forth from the juxtaposition of two images, that is, of two equally actualized signifiers. It flashes between two signifiers, one of which has replayed the other by taking the other's place in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present by virtue of its (metonymic) connection to the rest of the chain. (Ibid.)

Dylan Evans further explicates:

Metonymy thus concerns the ways in which signifiers can be combined/linked in a single signifying chain ("horizontal" relations), whereas metaphor concerns the ways in which a signifier in one signifying chain may be substituted for a signifier in another chain ("vertical" relations). Together, metaphor and metonymy constitute the way in which signification is produced. (113)

What I call the *metaphoric* act of reading addresses the "vertical relations" between the reader and a given narrative text—both being constituted of and in signifiers in the first place. The psychical identification taking place during the metaphoric act of reading points to the phenomenon in which the reader takes his or her narrative specular other's (or imago's) place in the signifying chain of the narrative (con)text. The metaphoric act of reading may explain the reader-text cathexis: namely, the reader identifies with certain types of heroes or heroines from one narrative (as a signifying chain) to another, all bearing similar or identical traits, and forms an emotional cathexis with them. Such characters consequently become for the reader substitutive imagos, or, better still, ideal egos. Once this reader-text cathexis forms, the reader takes his/her fictive imago's place in the narrative signifying chain to experience narrative actions, events, and the overall design, intention, desire, and meaning of that given narrative.

Take Maggie Tulliver, George Eliot's heroine of her second novel *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), for instance. With herself being dark-haired and having grown up with an

angelic blond cousin, Lucy Deane, as the token girl of Maggie's (child and adult) world, Maggie Tulliver identifies with the "dark unhappy" heroines of the novels she reads. At one point of the novel, she asks Philip Wakem, the son of the "destroyer" of Maggie's father yet a childhood friend who has always loved Maggie, to take back a book he lends her. It is a novel entitled *Corinne* (1807), written by Madame de Staël (1766-1817), in which "the dark-haired, literary heroine loses her lover to her half-sister, the fair-haired, conventional Lucille" (*The Mill on the Floss: A Norton Critical Edition* 270). Maggie declares to Philip Wakem:

I didn't finish the book. As soon as I came to the blond-haired young lady reading in the park, I shut it up, and determined to read no further. I foresaw that that light-complexioned girl would win away all the love from Corinne and make her miserable. I am determined to read no more books where the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness. I should begin to have a prejudice against them. If you could give me some story, now, where the dark woman triumphs, it would restore the balance. I want to avenge Rebecca and Flora MacIvor, and Minna [i.e. the dark-haired heroines in Sir Walter Scott's novels] and all the rest of the dark unhappy ones [...]. (Ibid.)

Maggie reads *metaphorically*. She knows which type of heroines she can and cannot form cathexes with because she reads the novels as if looking into a wall of mirrors wherein she not only finds a troop of imagos but also seeks her ideal egos. She knows the blond heroines, while being signifiers of the desire of the rest of her world, can never be ideal for her. As a child, however, Maggie desired her angelic cousin, Lucy Deane, for herself; she desired to take Lucy's image as her own—to become, like Lucy, a desirable *objet petit a*, which may cause desire for Maggie in the Other (e.g., the mother, Mrs. Tulliver, and the others at St. Ogg's, the town which constitutes the heroine's world):

Certainly the contrast between the cousins was conspicuous, and, to superficial eyes, was very much to the disadvantage of Maggie [...]. It was like the contrast between a rough, dark, overgrown puppy and a white kitten. [...]. Maggie always looked at Lucy with delight. She was fond of fancying a world where the people never got any larger than children of their own age, and she made the queen of it just like Lucy, with a little crown on her head, and a little scepter in her hand ... only the queen was Maggie herself in Lucy's form. (52)

Yet, a "Maggie in Lucy's form" is never formed. Lucy as a childhood ideal ego remains inassimilable to Maggie and, consequently, together with other "blond-haired young ladies" she later reads in novels, comes to stand for an imago which is not simply different but, more significantly, *differentiated* from Maggie's ideal ego. It is the dark-haired and unhappy heroines who now serve as substitutive signifiers of Maggie's ego that Maggie identifies and identifies with in her *metaphoric* act of reading.

The metamorphic act of reading bespeaks the fact that the act of reading itself is more than an intellectual activity, such as reading and deciphering "the hermeneutic code" coined by Roland Barthes⁴⁰; an aesthetic response, as Wolfgang Iser proposes⁴¹; or, a social "transaction" or "contract" between the reader and any narrative text, together

⁴⁰ In *S/Z* (1970), Barthes propounds "five major codes under which all the textual signifiers can be grouped" (19). The *hermeneutic code*, being one of them, refers to a set of "terms by which an enigma can be distinguished, suggested, formulated, held in suspense, and finally disclosed" (Ibid.). Detective stories, for instance, represent a genre of texts comprising the hermeneutic code.

⁴¹ Wolfgang Iser proposes that the act of reading is an aesthetic response "in terms of a dialectic relationship between text, reader, and their interactions. It is called aesthetic response because, although it is brought about by the text, it brings into play the imaginative and perceptive faculties of the reader, in order to make him adjust and even differentiate his own focus" ("Preface" x). In this sense, Iser writes that the act of reading is a "performance"; that "literary texts initiate 'performances' of meaning rather than actually formulating meanings themselves" (27). I agree with Iser in that the act of reading is performative. Yet I believe that the act of reading, if not on all occasions, involves something more than an aesthetic response and performance. On many occasions, the act of reading has a deep connection to what Lacan names as "the formation of the *I* function"; i.e. the ego-formation. This argument of mine may explain why parents of all cultures would want to pay attention to the reading material selected for their children.

with its situation, as argued by Ross Chambers.⁴² The reading performance concerns more—it concerns the human subject as reader with his or her conscious and unconscious mental apparatuses in (full) operation. Following in the footsteps of Ernst Kris and Simon O. Lesser (the pioneers of works on the psychology of reading), literary-psychoanalytic critic and reader-response theorist Norman N. Holland has in his own classic study *The Dynamics of Literary Response* (1968) delved into the relationship between the act of reading and responding to literature and the reader’s psychic processing. Holland has contested that reading and responding to a given text calls for varying degrees of conscious intellectualization as well as unconscious (even pre-conscious) projection and introjection. The more intellectualizing work a text demands of its reader, the less he or she is likely to undergo unconscious projection and introjection; in this case, the reader is prompted to hold more emotional and psychological distance from “engrossment” in the text. This proposition of Holland’s significantly explains the reader’s (mentally dizzying while emotionally detached) experience of Henry James’ fictions, for instance. Aesthetic works such as James’ would compel the reader to assume the stance of what Holland names as “the intellecting reader” rather than that of “the introjecting reader.”⁴³ Holland further explains:

[The act of reading] involves a “deepening,” that is, in technical terms, a partial, selective, ego-syntonic ego regression, an extension of ego boundaries downward to the level of basic trust [as in the infant’s trust in his caretaker]. The result is, at

⁴² According to Ross Chambers, who is interested in the performative function of story-telling and in the relation between stories and the situations they are produced in and may later transform, “narrative is most appropriately described as a transactional phenomenon. Transactional in that it mediates *exchanges* that produce historical change, it is transactional, too, in that this functioning is itself dependent on an initial *contract*, an understanding between the participants in the exchange as to the purposes served by the narrative function, its ‘point.’ Although narrative content is not irrelevant, of course, it is this contractual agreement as to point that assigns meaningfulness to the discourse. In this respect, literary texts yield plentiful evidence of their own awareness of the transactional basis of narrative interactions” (*Story and Situation* 8).

⁴³ For more about the two types of readers and their readerly responses, see, for instance, Chapter 6 “Meaning as Defense” in *The Dynamics of Literary Response*.

the deepest level of response, a kind of fusion or introjection based on oral wishes to incorporate, so that what goes on at a fairly primitive level in the literary work feels as though it is going on within us or, more exactly, not outside us [not “out there” in the external world].⁴⁴ (104)

Holland argues that if the reader feels too much *Unlust* (he uses the word “discomfort,” 98), the reader then withdraws his or her “engrossment” in the text, with “(readerly) withdrawal” understood as a self-defensive mechanism.⁴⁵ Thus, Holland’s model can be said to base the psychic processing of reader-response on the pleasure principle. Though “regressing” into an infantile state during the act of reading and responding, the ego is still capable of guarding or fending itself against excessive Lust and, even more so, Unlust. While agreeing with Holland’s humanistic approach to reading *the human subject* into the reader and into the reader-text dynamics, I venture further.

We may have all experienced at certain point (with narrative texts or other types of aesthetic works) and hence could testify that the act of reading proves to be an intensely emotional and overwhelmingly psychological experience. (Take our visual reading of Van Gogh’s paintings, for instance.) Sometimes we may not even be able to withdraw our affective engagement in what we read (a novel or memoir) or watch (a play or movie) as effectively and consciously as we wish we could (so as to avoid emotional paralysis, breakdown, or other excessive Unlust). At other times we may not even wish for any such withdrawal, despite that the danger of engrossment is drawing near. Rather, on

⁴⁴ Concerning the relationship among orality, “basic trust,” and reading, consult, in particular, Chapter 3 “The ‘Willing Suspension of Disbelief’ ” in *The Dynamics of Literary Response*.

⁴⁵ The precise passage of Holland’s text runs as follows: “In short, our model tells us that the introjection necessary for full experience of a work depends on two conscious expectations: first, that the work will please us; second, that we will not have to act on it. If either expectation is defeated, our fusion with the work breaks down and we ‘snap out of it.’ The audience can break the dyadic tie to the work if physical or psychic discomfort becomes too severe. The literary work can break it, too. Our model helps us to see how tinkering with the introjecting process can lead to some of the more exotic effects possible in literature” (*The Dynamics of Literary Response* 98).

many occasions, we actively want to identify and relate to the narratives and/or fictive others we encounter. The fact is: we *cannot* always abide by what the pleasure principle dictates for our own good and not transgress its safely pleasurable bounds. Nor can we really at all times (as perhaps what I would call “the model reader” could) regulate how we feel toward that which we read or watch—that which we “take in” (especially) most unconsciously. How then, in terms of reader-response, shall we explain Freud’s own hypothesis about that which goes beyond the pleasure principle? Where does the Freudian death drive, together with the Lacanian notion of *jouissance* (again, being transgressive by nature), fit in a reader-response model predicated upon such a principle?

I cannot provide ready answers to the above-raised questions here in this chapter (even in this project), yet I would like to revisit my earlier argument about narrative and the mirror stage, and about reading and readerly identification on the psychical level. That narratives function as metaphoric mirrors wherein we read, seek, and identify our selves would help highlight the reading-responding phenomenon in which we not only bring our respective identities (as well as fantasies, defenses, and cultural codes) to texts,⁴⁶ but reading narrative texts also impacts the formation of our “*I* function,” a phrase used by Lacan (*Écrits* 7-8). In brief, identification that is at stake in reader-response operates in a two-way interactive traffic: from reader to text *and* from text back to reader (or, in Holland’s term, “identity-governing-feedback loops”). What we see or seek in the *specular other*—in the mirror or *narrative as mirror*—helps (though not necessarily in its most positive and constructive sense) shape in return our own identities (plus unconscious fantasies, defenses, and the like) as well as our self-

⁴⁶ Such a reader-response theory can be found in Norman Holland’s other works, besides *The Dynamics of Literary Response*. In *The Critical I* (1992), for instance, Holland puts it more succinctly: “readers project their own fantasies onto the materials of the text. Similarly, readers impose their own defenses—all by a complex interaction between an I and the physical text and cultural codes for interpretation and understanding. [...]. As a result, reader-response critics concluded we could no longer sustain the traditional literary idea of a stable text with a determinate ‘meaning.’ Rather, readers make meaning” (87).

imago/other relational axis. Hence, in reading and responding to that which we read, we “regress” not only to the stage of orality as Holland fathoms, but also to *the mirror stage* (to the Lacanian *imaginary* order). Given this homology, and that the boundary between self and (specular) other as imago is precariously fluid during the mirror stage wherein the *I*-formation is at stake, we find that “parental guidance” is often urged or required for choosing the “right” texts and works for children to read or watch. Were reader-response a simple aesthetic performance or a one-way conscious inputting activity on the reader’s part (from reader to text), such “warning” for a risky absence of the guiding (m/f)Other would not make sense in the first place. Let us not forget that at the mirror stage the (m/f)Other’s directive presence would help form a line of identification between the child’s self and his/her (specular) other: *yes, this is you, or, no, this is not you*. So it is with reading that which we look and read *into*. Narratives as metamorphic mirrors and reading as “regression” (personally I do not savor the use of such a word albeit technically this is the case) to the mirror stage can account for the *other* (imaginary) dimension of the psychic processing during the act of reading (from text to reader). My proposition addresses the “I” in the reader’s identifying experience of reading and responding. With all this said, I want to proceed and contemplate next the risk of *over-identification* that transgresses the “safe” boundaries between self and fictive other, between reality and fictionality—a probable risk that has not been discussed even by Holland; that has not been engaged in his risk-proof model of “identity-governing-feedback loops.”

In *The Critical I* (1992), Holland explains that (according to his “identity-governing-feedback model”) each individual reader’s identity not only “gives rise to” his or her experience of an aesthetic text or work, but the identity also “results from it, and this circularity is the essence of feedback or, if you prefer, inquiry leading to dialogue” (51).

But *how exactly* and *to what extent* can the reader's individual identity "result from" the experience of reading and responding? The issue is a significant one but left un-tackled by Holland. (Neither is the term "identification"—indeed, a fuzzy one in Holland's own opinion—tampered with in his reader-response studies.) I hope the "how" question has—to certain degree of validity—been answered by my proposition of the relation between the act of reading as psychologically metaphoric and the mirror stage. Now, *to what extent* can the reader's individual identity "result from" his/her reading experience? What happens when the safe boundary of identification between the reader's self and his/her fictive other, between reality and fictionality, is crossed and trespassed?

I postulate that if the reader over-identifies with a certain character or narrative situation, the *metaphoric* act of reading runs the risk of turning into what I designate as a *neurotic* or *psychotic* mode of reading. Note: I borrow these psychoanalytic tropes to name, rather broadly, the different modes of reading *not* because I have any intention of psychoanalyzing or even pathologizing reading, *but* because I want to demonstrate with the hypothesis I propose (which, of course, awaits experimental validation) a deep relation among the act of reading, our psychic processing of the reading material, and ego-formation, or the formation of the "I function." As argued, narratives function the way the mirror stage operates for the human subject; they help shape the (reading) subject's ego-formation and establish a relationship between the subject and his/her perception of reality, or, "between the *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt*" (*Écrits* 6). I do *not*, however, assert that there is a "normalcy," vis-à-vis an "abnormalcy," of reader response. Rather (and at best), I would like to discuss *different psychical structurations of the relation between the reader and the narrative (its situation or character) with which the reader identifies*—in the hope of better explaining the phenomenon of over-

identification likely to be formed in the (“neurotic” or “psychotic”) act of reading once the line is crossed.

Before I explain what I designate as the “psychotic” and “neurotic” modes of reading, I need to bring up, in the first place, psychoanalyst Bruce Fink’s invaluable introduction (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 1997) to a Lacanian understanding of psychosis and neurosis.⁴⁷ For a human subject to enter the symbolic order and successfully function without serious pathological fixations upon the other two orders (the imaginary and the real), s/he needs to be *completely castrated*. By “complete castration” Bruce means the crucial steps of *alienation* and *separation* (Bruce bases both terms on Lacan’s own teaching). As we know, the clinical understanding of psychosis is one of Lacan’s major contributions to the field of psychoanalysis (whereas neurosis is Freud’s). Simply put, psychosis forms under the circumstances in which the paternal function (*le Nom/non du Père*) fails to exist in the supposedly triadic relationship among child, mother, and father. Note: it is the paternal *function*—not a biological father’s actual material presence—that is involved here (a mother, for instance, could take on the paternal *function* in the father’s stead, while in many a 19th century novel it is the uncle that assumes the paternal function⁴⁸). This function of what Lacan terms as the Name-of-the-Father (regardless of who performs it, albeit it is usually the father) is of paramount importance to the child subject’s psychical formation and further development because it *alienates* the child from being completely “engulfed within the mother” for good (*A Clinical Introduction* 195). Once successfully alienated, the child

⁴⁷ See Lacan’s third seminar (1955-56) *The Psychoses* (New York: Norton, 1993) for “the master’s” own discourse about the clinical differences between psychosis and neurosis.

⁴⁸ As examples: in Benjamin Disraeli’s novel *Sybil, or The Two Nations* (1845), Lady Marney, mother of Charles Egremont the male protagonist, can be said to exert the paternal function after the death of Lord Marney the father; in pushing Egremont into Parliament, she marries her paternal function with law. In other 19th century novels such as Austen’s *Mansfield Park* (1814) and Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley* (1849), it is the uncles that perform such a function, irrespective of the nieces’ rebellions (and the efficacy of their rebellions). And in Dickens’ *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), old Martin Chuzzlewit, grandfather of young Martin Chuzzlewit, exercises the paternal function in the stead of an absent father.

subject can move on to the next phase (*separation*). The failure or nonexistence of the paternal function leaves the child subject in an exclusive oneness with the mother and result in the subject's zero recognition of the symbolic order in which the language of the law exists, presides, and exerts its influence. The subject then develops a psychotic psychological makeup. Furthermore, the psychotic is *unable* to create new metaphors; "[t]he metaphorical use of language is not available to psychotics, according to Lacan, due to the failure of *the essential metaphor: the paternal metaphor*" [Italics original] (Ibid. 91). This failure means that "[t]he psychotic's discourse is curiously devoid of original metaphors, specifically poetic devices through which most people are able to create new meanings. Thanks to imitation, a psychotic can learn to speak the way other people speak (Seminar III, 285), but the essential structure of language is not integrated in the same way" (Ibid. 90-91).

Neurosis forms under different circumstances. The neurotic has undergone the earlier stage of alienation without complications. S/he recognizes too well the paternal function that has successfully alienated him/her from an exclusive oneness with the mother for good. Alienation is forever yet remains hard to digest, so the neurotic develops his (the obsessional neurotic's) or her (the hysteric neurotic's) own self-defensive mechanism, i.e., his or her own fantasy, as a way to respond to and cope with this separation.⁴⁹ Because actual oneness or wholeness with the mother is no longer an option (unlike its being, by contrast, the *only* option or psychological scenario for the psychotic), the neurotic identifies with an *objet petit a* (a partial object) which would

⁴⁹ In line with the customary psychoanalytic usage, I ascribe the masculine pronoun to the obsessional and the feminine to the hysteric. This, however, does not mean that men cannot be hysterics (or women cannot be obsessional neurotics). In the clinical setting, the masculine and feminine attributes do not point to or equal biological structures of the human subjects; instead, they bespeak the masculine or feminine position in which the subject functions, operates, or expresses him- or herself.

remind him (the obsessional) or her (the hysteric) of the m(O)ther.⁵⁰ Owing to the relational dynamics between the neurotic and the m(O)ther, Lacan speaks of objet petit a as the *rem(a)inder* of the Other. Therefore, the neurotic's fantasy concerns the way in which he or she reconstructs his/her relation to the desired Other and thereby justifies his/her position in separation *through his/her relation to the objet petit a in the first place*. Accordingly, the hysteric positions herself as *the* objet petit a, *the* cause of the (m)Other's desire, whereas the obsessional takes the object for himself and in doing so denies and negates his desire for the (m)Other. In other words, the hysteric's desire depends on and is constituted in the desire of the Other; she inscribes herself into that which the Other desires in order to fantasize about achieving oneness with the Other again. The obsessional jettisons the idea that he desires the Other at all for fear that, if he betrays his desire as such, he will be brought face to face with his helpless, dependent state of being. Hence, desire is everything to the hysteric, while desire is impossible in the obsessional.⁵¹ This Lacanian understanding of the different structures and structurations of psychosis and neurosis prepares us to examine what I designate as the psychotic and neurotic modes of reading.

The psychotic reader may use narrative as objet petit a to engulf him- or herself within the desired Other. In the psychotic mode of reading, the reader and the narrative are one. *No alienation* exists between the two; there is *no* third term that effectively alienates the reader from being locked up in oneness with the narrative situation or character (or, in my term, the fictive other) with which the psychotic reader identifies. No "reality" presides outside the narrative world or fictive reality. The narrative

⁵⁰ I write "m(O)ther" here in the case of the neurotic, obsessional or neurotic, because the neurotic goes through the stage of *alienation*; hence, mother is experienced by the neurotic as an Other. In placing parentheses around the letter O, I suggest Otherness in mother as experienced by the neurotic.

⁵¹ For more, see Fink's chapter on "Neurosis" (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis*), 112-64.

language is *the* language of the reader reading in the psychotic mode; there exist no other newly created metaphors or metaphoric registers for the psychotic reader. There is neither conceptual nor psychical differentiation between the psychotic reader and his/her fictive other—*s/he is the fictive other*, (the psychotic reader's desire is not only caused by but *is* literally his/her fictive other's), and vice versa. In this sense, the narrative with which the reader as such "over-identifies" is not understood as an extraneous object with a (fictive) life and reality different and apart from his/her own—in this mode of reading, narrative as objet petit a is realized maximally and most undifferentiatedly.

The neurotic reader (or the reader reading in the neurotic mode) uses narrative as objet petit a to reconfigure his/her separation from the desired Other. While narrative also functions as objet petit a in the neurotic mode of reading, the neurotic reader apprehends a basic divide, or *alienation*, between him-/herself as a reading subject and the narrative as an object (of and for reading). Albeit a (conceptual as well as psychical) divide between the neurotic reader and narrative, narrative as objet petit a forms or constitutes a *significant* part of his/her subjectivity (this impacted psychical formation exceeds the limits of the metaphoric mode of reading in which the metaphoric reader identifies with or relates to his/her fictive other moderately, but the neurotic reader's over-identification still does not *completely* alter or enclose the reader's subject formation as in the psychotic mode of reading). Equally important, narrative as objet petit a organizes the neurotic reader's fantasy about his/her relation to the symbolic order and symbolic Other (e.g., other language-constituted human beings, institutions, or agencies). Narrative as objet petit a proffers the neurotic reader a way of getting to or an ideal blueprint for dealing with the Other inhabiting his/her everyday symbolized reality. The reader in the neurotic mode of reading may read and respond to a narrative

text (to its fictive situation or character) *as the hysteric*; namely, the reader appropriates, for instance, a hero's or heroine's desires or characteristics by over-identifying with them. In other words, the hysteric reader's desire regarding the symbolic Other outside the narrative world does not exist completely independent (or non-correlative) of his/her fictive other's desire within the fictional world. Hence, while the neurotic (particularly the hysteric) reader may over-desire to read his or her self *into* narratives and their situations and to stay faithful to them, the psychotic reader tends to read narratives *out of* their rightful contexts, confusing narrative realities with the world outside those narratives and, very likely, distorting all.

But let us pause here for a short while. So far my expostulation of the three modes of reading has run along psychoanalytic lines. Some of my readers, especially those who are versed in narrative theory and its vocabulary, may have detected my fuzzy use of the loaded term "the reader" in discoursing about my three modes of reading and psychical identifications. One may ask: (how) can I bring the ramifications of existent narrative concepts concerning readers and audiences into my discussion and theorization here since this is not only a Lacanian but, even more so, a narratological project as well? With this potential query in mind, I would like to reinstate a narratological gaze and reflection, and I will refer only to Peter J. Rabinowitz's and Gerald Prince's conceptualizations of audiences, readers, and narratees here apropos of my own model.

In his article "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences" (1977), Rabinowitz proposes four audiences implied in a given narrative text: 1) *the actual audience* (akin to what Gerald Prince calls *the real reader*), which "consists of the flesh-and-blood people who read the book"; 2) *the authorial audience* (akin to what Prince calls *the virtual reader*), which refers to a satisfactory readership—with competent literacy, knowledge,

and comprehension—that the implied author has in mind or relies on when composing his/her text and constructing its meaning or message(s); 3) *the narrative audience*, which receives the narrator’s narration and understands, again with competence yet at the same with a conscious suspension of disbelief, the hypothetical situations of narrative or fictional worlds; 4) *the ideal narrative audience* (akin to what Prince calls *the ideal reader*), which bespeaks the readership that believes particularly an unreliable narrator and “accepts his judgments, sympathizes with his plight, laughs at his jokes even when they are bad” (consult Richter, ed., 212-21). Despite the similarities between Prince’s and Rabinowitz’s conceptualizations of readers and audiences, Prince’s ideas of *the narratee* and *the zero-degree narratee* (proposed four years earlier in 1973 in his article “Introduction to the Study of the Narratee”) remain uniquely his own. Simply put, the narratee is one who receives the narrator’s narration or story. *The zero-degree narratee*, as Prince elaborates, is a narratee who possesses “a perfect mastery of [narrative] grammar but not of the (infinite) paragrammatical possibilities” (Tompkins, ed., 10). In other words, the zero-degree narratee understands the language of narrative (as well as that of the narrator) and “knows narrative grammar, the rules by which any story is elaborated [and advanced]” (Ibid.). Prince further remarks:

Thus, he [the zero-degree narratee] does not lack positive characteristics. But he also does not want negative traits. He can thus only follow a narrative in a well-defined and concrete way and is obliged to acquaint himself with the events by reading from the first page to the last, from the initial word to the final word. In addition, he is without any personality or social characteristics. He is neither good nor bad, pessimistic nor optimistic, revolutionary nor bourgeois, and his character, his position in society, never colors his perception of the events described to him. [...]. *The consequences of this are very important. Without the assistance of the narrator, without his explanations and the information supplied by him, the*

narratee is able neither to interpret the value of an action nor to grasp its repercussions. He is incapable of determining the morality or immorality of a character, the realism or extravagance of a description, the merits of a rejoinder, the satirical intention of a tirade [...]. [Emphasis mine] (Tompkins, ed., 10-11)

In other words, the zero-degree narratee is an absorbing receptacle of whatever the narrator, reliable or not, narrates for, imparts to, and even imposes on him/her. Among all such types of narratees, readers, and audiences as posited by Rabinowitz and Prince, it can be said that the zero-degree narratee is most prone to narrative (or the narrator's) influences and shaping powers. In short, the zero-degree narratee is also a zero-identity narratee.

Now back to my own model. I would like to first propose that the reader who engages in what I call the *metaphoric* mode of reading has no difficulty of turning into, for instance, *the virtual reader* (Prince) or *the authorial audience* (Rabinowitz), whose desires are able to be caused and sustained by the author's or the narrative's navigation. The metaphoric reader is able to really *engage* the text and form an emotional cathexis (or psychological identification) with it, and meanwhile retaining his/her identity as *the real reader* (Prince) or *the actual audience* (Rabinowitz). That is to say, the boundaries between the two (real/actual vis-à-vis virtual/authorial) are kept, and the metaphoric reader is able to turn into a new or different kind of the virtual reader or actual audience that each new or different text (or implied author) requires and desires. Furthermore, the metaphoric reader will be able to emerge out of his/her reading engagement(s) still as a "reader" and not as one of the "characters" with whom s/he identifies along the reading process and whose identity s/he appropriates for him- or herself in fantasy.

The neurotic reader or the one who engages in the neurotic mode of reading is, I think, the best candidate for becoming *the ideal narrative audience* (Rabinowitz) or *the ideal reader* (Prince). Whatever the implied author/narrator/text hands to the neurotic reader (such as character portraits) is psychically assimilated and appropriated. The neurotic reader desires, for instance, what the character (or his/or fictive other) with whom s/he identifies desires. The neurotic reader is the ideal reader in the sense that s/he desires to become “just like” (or “precisely like”) the character of his/her psychical identification and wants the narrative world to turn into his/her reality in life. When the neurotic reader emerges out of his/her narrative or reading engagement, a part of his/her real reader’s identity, psychical makeup, and/or fantasy is significantly changed or reconfigured. Namely, the neurotic reader as the ideal reader would have his/her identity as the real reader reconstituted. In addition, unlike the metaphoric reader who can read from text to text (from one narrative world to another), form a different or new readerly cathexis each time, and assume to be the kind of the authorial audience (or the virtual reader) required of him/her on each respective occasion, the neurotic reader is more likely to hold on or keep returning to one specific master narrative (or masterplot) that can satisfy or speak to his/her fantasy the most. Reading in search of such a masterplot, the neurotic reader is likely to underread or overread a given narrative text that bears hint, however slight, to the masterplot of his/her desire because reading for the masterplot is the neurotic reader’s way to make appear (as in the Freudian *fort/da* game) his/her master signifier—the one signifier s/he desires to name and possess (or access) through linguistic signification and narrative emplotment.

Take Gustave Flaubert’s famous heroine Emma Bovary, for instance. The impact of Emma’s school-day reading upon her later life is notorious; before she actually poisons herself with arsenic, Emma’s neurotic mode of reading has first “poisoned” her psychical

formation. In the passage below, Flaubert's narrator focalizes on Madame Emma Bovary's stream of consciousness that flows before and after her marriage to Charles Bovary:

Before her wedding-day, she had thought she was in love; but since she lacked the happiness that should have come from that love, she must have been mistaken, she fancied. And Emma sought to find out exactly what was meant in real life by the words *felicity*, *passion* and *rapture*, which had seemed so fine on the pages of the books. (27)

And Geoffrey Wall well observes Emma's underreading of narrative texts:

Emma's reading exists in a radically disconnected form: as scenes, bits of stories, vivid fragments. In all of this there is no narrative, no sustained history, no refashioning of herself. As a reader she only wants what she can incorporate easily into the stereotyped repertoire of her fantasies. We are told that she reads Balzac and George Sand. But she evidently misses the point. The romantic feminism of George Sand and Balzac, their stories of the self-education and emancipation of the women of the 1830s, are *mysteriously* lost on Emma Rouault. [Emphasis mine] ("Introduction" xiv)

I believe what causes young Emma's "mysterious" underreading of narrative texts is the heroine's neurotic mode of reading which drives her to read for *the* masterplot that she desires to see appearing and repeated from narrative to narrative. Albeit at the expense of underreading, Emma's neurotic reading for *her* masterplot enables a coveted proximity to *her* master signifier—namely, passionate love and rapturous romance. Contrary to Wall's argument that in young Emma's reading "there is no narrative, no sustained history, no refashioning of herself" (quoted above), I would like to stress that her neurotic mode of reading had significantly shaped her psychical formation when she

was a young girl, particularly in terms of her readerly over-identification with the novelistic heroines and her (later) romantic relation to the male Other. When opportunities finally arrive, Madame Emma Bovary turns her real life into the master narrative of her heart; she *novelizes* her real-life romantic scenarios and rendezvous. In living her life as a (most desired) narrative, “[s]he summoned the heroines from the books she had read, and the lyric host of these unchaste women began their chorus in her memory, sister-voices, enticing her. She merged into her own imaginings, playing a real part, realizing the long dream of her youth, seeing herself as one of those great lovers she had so long envied” (131). That Emma over-identifies and finds a “sisterly” bond with the heroines in narratives bespeaks the imaginary psychical cathexis she has formed in reading. They are her fictive others, better still, her ideal egos whose romantic adventures and destinies she longs to (and does) appropriate. And they provide her with the agency through which she configures her desire and re-fashions her *self*. She would not have been *the* Madame Emma Bovary had her self not been re-fashioned by her neurotic readings.

Yet, despite her neurotic over-identification with the heroines and their narrative situations, Flaubert’s Emma is still able to retain her real reader’s identity as “Madame Bovary.” In fact, it is the gap (or split) between her *ideal* reader’s identity and her *real* reader’s identity that gives rise to her *jouissance* (pleasure-in-pain/suffering). She enjoys appropriating the fictive heroines’ experiences yet suffers a constant call-back to reality. Her pain resides in that she can never wholly get rid of her flesh-and-blood persona (her real reader’s identity). However much she attempts, Emma returns to bland reality and continues functioning as Madame Bovary in her provincial village which tolerates no scandal. The gap finally consumes her and, with her suicide, which reckons no redemption, ruins the lives of her loving husband and their orphaned child.

Emma Bovary exemplifies how a neurotic reader oscillates between fiction and reality; between a fictional blend-in and a real-life positioning that holds and prevails.

In the *psychotic* mode of reading, the real reader (or the actual audience) disappears. I would like to even suggest that the psychotic reader is in the reading-identifying process no longer a “reader” of any kind. In terms of his or her reception of narrative information and role in narrative communication, the psychotic reader becomes *the zero-degree narratee*, and the reality in life recedes or morphs into that of the narrative world s/he identifies with. The psychotic reader as the zero-degree narratee receives the narrative situation and information directly—without mediation of any sort—from the hands of the narrator (or the implied author himself). For the psychotic reader, the narrative of his/her over-identification is narrated *to, for, and even about* him/her. (To put it in common parlance, the psychotic reader takes narrative happenings *too personally*. Later I will use one of Lacan’s own female patients as illustration.) Not only is s/he completely *inside* the narrative, but the psychotic reader as the zero-degree narratee further becomes a narrative actant (a character within the narrative) and involves firsthand in the happenings (even propelling) of the narrative plot—the narrative plot *is* the psychotic reader’s (p)lot. In terms of his or her relation to the imaginary imago in narrative, no alienation exists between the psychotic reader and the fictive other with whom s/he over-identifies.

To briefly conclude, in the *metaphoric* act of reading, the level of psychical identification is moderate, and there is a full readerly understanding (or consciousness) of *alienation* and *separation* between the metaphoric reader and a given narrative; hence, reality ≠ fictionality. In the *neurotic* mode of reading, the level of identification runs high (identification at this level turns into over-identification), and, while there is a

sufficient readerly understanding (or consciousness) of *alienation* between the neurotic reader and the narrative, the fictive situation or character (fictive other) appears so desirable that the reader as such *wishes no or little separation* from it. Reality is desired by the neurotic reader to be modeled on or coordinated with fictionality, hence reality \approx (approximates or appropriates) fictionality. In the *psychotic* mode of reading, the level of over-identification reaches the maximum, and there is *neither separation nor alienation* between the psychotic reader and the narrative (and/or fictive other); hence, reality = fictionality. Again, the three modes of reading as I map out here all point to the underpinning function of narrative as objet petit a, the cause that sustains (the reader's) desire. I have to emphasize that these are hypothetical *modes* of reader response, designed to explore the rather fuzzy locution "(readerly) identification" in psychoanalytic terms. I want to stress again that the metaphoric act of reading does not equal normalcy and, in like manner, reading in the neurotic or psychotic mode does not make one a (clinically validated) neurotic or psychotic subject.

As stated above, the reader in the neurotic mode of reading may read as the hysteric: the reader appropriates the hero's or heroine's desires by over-identifying with them and using them to (re)construct his/her own fantasy and self-defensive mechanism for coping with the symbolic reality in which s/he lives in. The heroine Pecola Breedlove in Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), exemplifies such a reading. The novel presents a case of a young black girl, Pecola Breedlove, who reads *neurotically* the white mainstream master narrative about Dick and Jane (a race- and culture-specific children's narrative that foregrounds Morrison's own novelistic narration of her child protagonist). Tired of being continually called "ugly" and appearing undesirable to her classmates and townspeople, the eleven-year-old Pecola fervently prays for a pair of blue eyes each night, without fail, for a year (*The Bluest Eye* 35). She desires what the others

in her world regard as “pretty,” hence “desirable”—in short, Pecola’s desire is the desire of the (white) Other:

Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes. Run, Jip, run. Jip runs, Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes. Jerry has blue eyes. Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four pretty blue eyes. Blue-sky eyes. Blue-like Mrs. Forrest’s blue blouse eyes. Morning-glory-blue-eyes. Alice-and-Jerry-blue-storybook-eyes. [Italics original] (*The Bluest Eye* 34-35)

Tragically, Pecola cannot free herself from the neurotic mode of reading narrative texts produced by the mainstream white culture. While the pair of blue eyes operates as a pair of objects of desire in Pecola’s plot, the Dick and Jane narrative stays as the underpinning cause of her desire (and that of her plot). The white children’s narrative signifies (and functions as) the objet petit a through the fantasy of which Pecola is able to (or so she believes) reconstruct her relation to the others around her. She is convinced that if *she*, Pecola Breedlove, also owns a pair of blue eyes, she can read herself into a Dick-and-Jane storybook-like world where “Mother is very nice,” “Father is smiling,” and the friends will play with her, a Pecola with pretty blue eyes which *breed love* (1). She takes the desire of the white Other for her own and wishes for an entrance to its signifying chain. To take into her own possession a pair of pretty blue eyes, the signifiers of the desire of the Other, is, for Pecola, the only way to desire as well as the only point of her symbolic re-entrance. Her reading of the white children’s narrative results in her desiring a different subject formation (first a de-formation of her racial identity and then re-formation of a different, more desirable one). Pecola’s neurotic mode of reading is, thus, reading for desiring that which is signified and idolized by the white Other in accordance with the white symbolic aesthetic law.

Lacan's first female patient, Marguerite Pantaine, whom Lacan called Aimée and whose study made Lacan famous,⁵² proves the other case. Trying to get her own fiction published, Marguerite Pantaine was often so deep in her psychotic mode of reading that she confused and distorted both narrative and everyday realities. On the evening of April 10, 1931, Pantaine "took a kitchen knife out of her purse and tried to kill the actress Huguette Duflos," who bore "some physical resemblance to the Antinea of Benoit's novel" (Roudinesco 32, 34) and whom, Pantaine believed during her state of delusion, intended to harm her. The biographer provides a significant account in terms of Marguerite Pantaine's psychotic mode of reading:

A novelist called Pierre Benoit told of the odd circumstances in which he had encountered Marguerite: "The would-be murderess used to go regularly to my publisher's office in the hope of seeing me. One day I actually met her. The unfortunate woman is certainly not normal. She claimed she was targeted in several of my novels, the subjects of which, she repeatedly maintained, were suggested to me by Madame Huguette Duflos. Perhaps the blows aimed at that charming actress were really intended for me." (Roudinesco 33)

In her psychotic mode of reading, receiving, and processing writer Benoit's narrative information and scenarios, Pantaine became the zero-degree narratee; she believed that the stories were addressed directly to her; that they were "about" her who featured a part of Benoit's fictional world. Also, there was *no alienation* between her and the fictive others she found in Benoit's novels. Her "reality" and the narrative reality were one; hence, what took place in the novels was going to happen to her and further unravel in her (fictionalized) world. This is only one example of what I would like to present as a reader deep in the psychotic mode of reading. (There will be a discussion of Steven

⁵² For a detailed—and critical—introduction to Marguerite Pantaine, her case, and Lacan's "dealings" with her, see Roudinesco's chapter "The Story of Marguerite" (*Jacques Lacan* 31-51).

Spielberg's Mecha child in his 2001 film *A. I.* as a psychotic reader in the last chapter.) Of course, I do not ignore the fact that Pantaine herself was a psychotic subject as her psychosis was later clinically validated. My point here is *not* about deciding whether the psychotic (or neurotic) mode of reading is pre-determined or caused by the reader's psychosis (or neurosis), or whether a psychotic (or neurotic) person could ever read otherwise. This is a research subject for clinical psychologists and psychoanalysts. At best, I suggest that narrative reading could trigger the outbreaks of or critically intensify the reader's symptoms, *if* s/he already possesses a certain pathological structure. In any event, reading (e.g., how we read and how we process what we read) is or can emerge as the symptom of our psychical identification and ensuing formation.

Even if not on all occasions, the act of reading involves more than an aesthetic performance or cognitive processing on the reader's part. It concerns more than the faculties of the human intellect, the apparatus of the brain, and neurobiological reactions. The act of reading—with narrative as *objet petit a* at the core—is psychologically metaphoric. We read and try to figure out the relation between ourselves (our *Innenwelt*) and the Other (the *Umwelt*), the latter being embodied in narrative as numerous imagos. The metaphoric reading enables us to read the Other in (*not* “into,” which marks the boundary between metaphoric and neurotic or psychotic readings) our selves and vice versa. Considering the complications I have mapped out, the act of reading may not be all pleasurable, hazardless, and safe within the bounds of the pleasure principle. Over-identification and over-desiring during the reading act may run greater risks than one would imagine. Just as books have been perceived and depicted on many occasions as “dangerous” or threatening objects in modern literary culture (popular culture included), so is the act of reading a potentially muddy business and human activity, especially

where over-identification occurs and the reader over-desires that which is fictionalized or narrated.

[VI]

Greimas, the Actantial Model, and Conclusion

Narratologically, structuralist- and formalist-models provide great examples of the act of reading as metaphoric. Narratological studies began with the works of Russian formalists in the 1920s, with afore-mentioned *Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp being one of the earliest pioneering contributions to the field. Followed by the “Prague Linguistic Circle,” the “Chicago School of Literary Criticism” (e.g., R. S. Crane, Wayne Booth, James Phelan) in the 1940s, as well as by French structuralists and semiotists (e.g., Roland Barthes, Gérard Genette, A.-J. Greimas) in the 1960s, the “*structuralist-semiotic* branch of narratology” was concerned with “what narrative is,” with an emphasis on its structure and universal grammar, along with its formal elements.⁵³ Two decades after its waning owing to the post-structuralist reaction in the 80s and 90s, I come back to the defense of the structuralist models which, I believe, have yielded an immensely intriguing and meaningful relation among structure, structuration, and the workings of the human psyche. The way Propp and Greimas understand narrative texts suggests a *metaphoric* way of reading: that is, if I could take the liberty here of translating Freud’s *dream* language into a *narrative* language, the *narrative-*

⁵³ Roland Barthes, for instance, famously writes that [d]iscourse has its units, its rules, its ‘grammar’ [...]. Structurally, narrative shares the characteristics of the sentence without ever being reducible to the simple sum of its sentences: a narrative is a long sentence, just as every constative sentence is in a way the rough outline of a short narrative” (“Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,” *Narratology*, 47). For more information on the structuralist narratology, consult also David H. Richter’s “Form: Elements of Narrative” in *Narrative/Theory* (New York: Longman, 1996), 93-104. The post-structuralist reaction of the 1980s and 1990s faulted the structuralist models for reducing the significance *and* dynamics of narrative, together with its constituents, to an ossifyingly function-oriented and decontextualized mode of existence. Post-structuralists thus shared the same effort of reading contexts and dynamics back into narratives.

thoughts are condensed and packed into smaller units of the *narrative-contents*. These narratologists, then, can be said to have read *metaphorically*, rather than, what they were much faulted for, reductively. They have, each in his respective way, successfully apprehended and analyzed the “vertical relations” among signifiers in narratives with which *metaphor* is concerned (that is, according to the Lacanian understanding of the term “metaphor” as introduced in the preceding section). They have understood the *substitutability* of structural units as signifiers that are dispersed from narrative to narrative, from one signifying chain to another.

Like Propp’s morphological study of Russian wondertales, A.-J. Greimas’ actantial model yields considerable psychological truths. Deriving his theory from Propp’s analysis of seven *dramatis personae*, as well as from Étienne Souriau’s inventory of six dramatic functions,⁵⁴ A.-J. Greimas opts for the term, *actants*, to name “the types of ‘actor’ established from the generic corpus as a whole” (Onega and Landa, eds., 76). According to Greimas, narratives contain at least two essential “actantial categories in the form of oppositions”—the category of “Subject” Vs. “Object” and the category of “Sender” Vs. “Receiver,” although, in some cases, the Subject functions also as the Sender and the Object as the Receiver. Other narratives may even include a third category—of “Helper” Vs. “Opponent.” In this actantial structure, the Helper and the Opponent are in direct relation to the Subject, and the Sender and the Receiver to the Object. Greimas uses the narrative type of *The Quest of the Holy Grail* as an example: God (the Sender) sends the Holy Grail (the Object) to humanity (the Receiver), and the

⁵⁴ Professor of esthetics at the University of Paris, Sorbonne, and author of *Les Deux cent mille situations dramatiques* (1950) and *Vocabulaire d’esthétique* (1990), Étienne Souriau (1892-1979) catalogues six “dramatic functions” in theatrical works. They are, as summarized by Greimas: *Lion* (“the oriented thematic Force”); *Sun* (“the Representative of the wished-for Good, of the orienting Value”); *Earth* (“virtual Recipient of that Good,” or, “that for which the Lion is working”); *Mars* (“the Opponent”); *Libra* (“the Arbiter, attributer of the Good”); and *Moon* (“the Rescue, the doubling of one of the preceding forces”). See Onega and Landa, eds, 80.

hero (the Subject) goes on a quest in search of the Grail. In like manner, Greimas reads the Marxist narrative as follows: humanity (the Subject) desires a classless society (the Object), with the working class as its Helper and the bourgeois class as its Opponent. In any case, what binds the axis between the Subject and the Object in narrative is *desire*: the hero *desires* the Grail or humanity *desires* a classless society. Greimas puts forth:

It is striking, we must note at this time, that the relationship between the subject and object which we had so much trouble defining precisely, and never succeeded in defining completely, appears here with a semantic investment identical in both inventories, that of “desire.” It seems possible to conceive that the transitivity or the *teleological relationship*, as we suggested calling it, situated in the mythical dimension of the manifestation, appears following the semic combination as a sememe realizing the *effect of meaning* of “desire.” If this is so, the two microuniverses, the genre “folktale” and the genre “drama,” defined by a first actantial category articulated in relation to desire, are capable of producing narrative-occurrences where desire will be manifested under the simultaneously practical and mythical form of “the quest.” [Italics original] (Onega and Landa, eds., 81)

The significance of Greimas’ structural model cannot be more highlighted here: *desire* defines the relation between the Subject and the Object in narrative; it is a relation paralleling the human psychic reality wherein the human subject (metamorphized by the narrative Subject) continually desires *objet petit a* (the “Object” in Greimas’ actantial structure) as a way of reaching (for) the Other. Greimas’ structural model also proves that *desire* sets plot, hand in hand with plot actants, in motion. Desire *causes* the genesis of plot and binds all actants together in an adhesive and meaningful way. A

Lacanian psychoanalytic understanding of Greimas' actantial narrative structure would look like this:

| | |
|----------|---|
| Subject | => the human subject |
| Object | => <i>objet petit a</i> (as <i>cause</i> , not simply <i>object</i> , of desire) |
| Sender | => the Unconscious (and/or the Ego) |
| Receiver | => the human subject |
| Helper | => the Imaginary (e.g., fantasy) or the Symbolic (e.g., <i>le Nom/Non du Père</i> ⁵⁵) |
| Opponent | => the Imaginary or the Symbolic |

The (narrative as well as human) Subject desires an Object as *objet petit a*, the cause of the Subject's desire, and the Object as *l'objet petit a* sustains the (narrative as well as human) Subject's continual desire and quest throughout the trajectory of a given narrative. Take, for instance, the traditional "fairy-tale" masterplot: Prince Charming sets out on a quest and fights off Opponents of all kinds to rescue his damsel-in-distress. Feminists have not failed to protest against the passive (more than often, inactive) and object-like state of the lady-in-question's being: most lamentably, all she has to and can do is patiently wait to be aroused to life by a hero's kiss or be rescued from her plight by a princely man. What a shame, indeed. Notwithstanding, I would like to turn the argument around and venture to attest that, while women in such a masterplot may well remain, physically speaking, passive *objects* of men's desire, they exist and function with a high degree of activity in its narrativity: they operate as *objets petit a*, the causes of men's actions and core desires of fairy-tale or fairy-tale-like narratives. They are the prime movers of such fictional universes and discourses. In such locution they are always kept in view and forever returned to. Passive as they seem to remain, the

⁵⁵ The *symbolic* order of Lacanian theory is exemplified by *le Nom du Père*, i.e., the Name-of-the-Father in Western society that enforces the law and dictates the "no," hence also *le Non du Père*.

damsels-in-distress or beloved heroines cause male narrative Subjects' desire to take a life as well as a form—even a name—in the narrative plots. In this sense, the women in fairy tales or fairy-tale-like narratives exist not simply as Receivers or, reductively, as Objects of male desire and fantasy; rather, they are metaphoric Senders, for, fundamentally, they ex-ist⁵⁶ and operate as first causes. Women as Senders and objects *petit a* (causes of male desire) are placed even more emphatically at the center of the narrative type of courtly love. Hence, in courtly-love or fairy-tale narratives, *Desire—thy name is Woman*.

The type of *objet petit a* can determine the order with which the Helper and the Opponent align themselves, considering that the imaginary and the symbolic orders can serve *both* as Helpers *and* as Opponents; they can assist or undercut the way in which the (narrative as well as human) Subject desires and obtains his/her *objet petit a*. A Bildungsroman like *David Copperfield* (1849-50) entails an *objet petit a* of the *symbolic* order—namely, the hero's name and place instated in the symbolic signifying chain via a professional establishment, accompanied by (if not culminating in) a successful marriage, in Victorian society. An *objet petit a* as such anchored in and signifying the symbolic order causes the hero to desire all the more strongly a placement for himself within that order as well. Ultimately, it is the symbolic Other and paternal order that David Copperfield desires. In his case, David's Helper, such as Agnes Wickfield, and Opponent, such as Edward Murdstone, both belong to the same order of the symbolic: while “the wicked stepfather” sends young Copperfield off the straight road to a proper education (a proper symbolization, so to speak), Agnes Wickfield—herself being an “Angel in the House,”⁵⁷ hence denoting an effectively symbolized adult woman—helps adult David

⁵⁶ Lacan uses the term “ex-ist” to refer to the real which precedes the symbolic order. “Ex-istence” predates (the human subject's) symbolic/symbolized “existence.”

⁵⁷ “The Angel in the House” was the title of a poem (first published in 1854 and revised up until

Copperfield function and secure placement in the symbolic. Copperfield's marriage to Agnes proves not only that (as the old saying goes) woman is the helpmate of man, but also that Agnes as one effective Helper in the symbolic order facilitates the symbolization of the hero. Such a marriage as an anchorage in the symbolic for the hero and as one of the most popular pre-modern narrative endings may explain, again, the reader's metaphoric act of reading: the human subject always seeks to return to the real wherein there is no lack, no split; wherein one experiences an ever-euphoric feeling of non-differentiation, of wholeness and/or union. Given that there is no *real* union outside the Lacanian order of the real, marriage as *symbolic* union between two human subjects is perhaps the best way in narrative through which the reader can approximate the feeling of jouissance, the primal satisfaction "ex-sisting" all desires.⁵⁸ Such narratives as *David Copperfield* satisfy our desire for a return of/to the real (non-split wholeness) *by proxy of symbolic union and oneness*.

Nevertheless, I discussed, in the earlier sections, how the lack of lacking (a lack of absence of the ever-present Other) can trigger anxiety rather than catalyze desire. The relation between the *presence* and the *absence* of the Other, be it mOther, fOther, or God the Father, is, in truth, of a dialectic nature: the history and the psyche of humanity have it that any kind of ever-presence or ever-absence would lead to revolt against enclosure

1862) written by Victorian poet Coventry Patmore in praise of his wife, Emily Patmore, whom he believed to be the model Victorian wife. The poem renders an image of ideal womanhood and desirable wifehood. A contrast to the erring man, the woman is described as and lauded for being pure, gentle, patient, sympathetic, forgiving, selflessly devoting and pleasing. This image of angelic, thus desirable, femininity, meanwhile aligned with content domesticity, enjoyed wide currency in Victorian society but was later revolted against by feminists such as Virginia Woolf. Being one of Charles Dickens' *angelic* female characters, Agnes Wickfield embodies the successful socialization, thus symbolization, of an Angel in the House in Victorian England.

⁵⁸ Lacan borrowed Heidegger's term, "ex-sists," to depict the real, which precedes language and any form of symbolization. Lacanian psychoanalyst Bruce Fink expounds on Lacan's notion of the real: "But we need not think in strictly temporal terms: the real need not be understood as merely *before* the letter, in the sense of disappearing altogether once a child has assimilated language. The real is perhaps best understood as *that which has not yet been symbolized*, remains to be symbolized, or even resists symbolization; and it may perfectly well exist 'alongside' and in spite of a speaker's considerable linguistic capabilities" (25).

or cause psychological and/or spiritual crises. What, indeed, produced perhaps the greatest affect of Western art in Norwegian expressionist Edvard Munch's painting *The Scream* (*Skrik*, 1893), if it were not the modern subject's symbolization (or procurement of a symbolic anchorage) suddenly crushed under the weight of the tension between an ever-present God and His ever-absence?⁵⁹ While the human subject, who has long lost his/her primal jouissance with the (m)Other, may find substitution (e.g., religion or marriage) in the symbolic order and thereby obtain an anchorage and meaning for life, ever-lasting enclosure in the symbolic may prove unwholesome. An ever-present marriage in narrative, for instance, may turn into a source of anxiety for the hero or the heroine. We know what kills Kate Chopin's Mrs. Mallard, her heroine of "The Story of an Hour" (1894), after all. It is not the *absence* of the husband, Brently Mallard, who is believed to have perished in a railroad accident. It is his return, instead, which signals the lack of lacking that puts to an abrupt end not only the life of the heroine as a newly self-liberated "goddess of Victory," but the life of the narrative itself as well.

Let us now return to A.-J. Greimas' actantial model—to the category of Helper and Opponent, in particular—as the last example of a significant relation between structuralist models and the psychological truths they, however unwittingly, have helped unveil; between textual and psychic dynamics on the whole. Now, while the human

⁵⁹ The painting is reputedly said to have captured the modern man's *existential angst* (a feeling of dread and anguish). A term used by Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), *angst*, as Julián Marías points out, "is not due to this or that cause; rather, it is caused by *nothing*; he who is in anguish is in anguish *over nothing*. Thus, it is *nothingness* that reveals itself to us in anguish" (431). Kierkegaard, often characterized as a Christian existentialist, does not negate the existence of God but leaves it as an individual choice (a "leap of faith"). Known as the father of existentialism, Kierkegaard *does* emphasize the importance of the human self—its *subjectivity*, freedom to choose and ensuing ethical responsibilities. The movement of existentialism following the Second World War was led by intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), who negates the existence of God and champions for the absolute freedom of humanity instead. However, this notion of humanity's absolute freedom, unbound by any responsibility towards God, is what Kierkegaard regards as the source of dread (a "dizziness of freedom"). In this light, Edvard Munch's *The Scream* captures the split the modern man feels simultaneously—between the *presence* and the *absence* of God, as well as the *existential angst* that follows a split consciousness as such.

existential lack can never be liquidated, narratives, especially fairy tales, can offer a fantasized version of different possibilities. Nevertheless, even fairy tales ensure that the object of desire cannot be easily obtained; it is kept at bay instead. The object of the hero's or heroine's desire is kept at bay by the presence of the Opponent. We may say that *not all* stories have Helpers, yet almost every human narrative—especially one with an edge—recruits an Opponent of some kind, whether it be part of one's self, another self, a *Nebenmensch*, a personified or an impersonal force. Some narratives, (as we find both in print and in film), enlist even an army of such Opponents to frustrate the hero or the heroine in the narrative middle. How do we then explain the apparent popularity and necessity of this actant in the construction and advancement of narrative plot?

Let us observe that, prior to Greimas, Propp had already linked the function of “the villain” intimately to absence and lack in *Morphology of the Folktale*. Propp explains:

Villainy is exceptionally important, since by means of it the actual movement of the tale is created. Absentation, the violation of an interdiction, delivery, the success of a deceit all prepare the way for this function, create its possibility of occurrence, or simply facilitate its happening. Therefore, the first seven functions may be regarded as the *preparatory part* of the tale, whereas the complication is begun by an act of villainy. [Italics original] (30-31)

The villain in Propp's term or the Opponent in Greimas' is the dramatis agent that ensures the object of (the hero's or heroine's) desire is *and remains* absent or lacking, consequently the hero's or heroine's, together with the reader's, fueled desire to go on a search or quest. In view of both Propp's and Greimas' models, we see that it is, in truth, the Opponent that sustains plot dynamics on the one hand and the reader's desire on the other. The Opponent is the narrative agent that keeps plot rolling while regulating its rhythm. The Opponent is the sine qua non of narrative and narrativity because *this*

actant makes absence possible, keeping the fulfillment of desire at bay and *within proximity*; and this absence, as I have argued, ensures the genesis of plot and the cause of desire.

For instance, there must be a reason for those fairy- and folktales of a considerable volume that have, at the outset of the stories, a “wicked stepmother” whose thought is bent on getting rid of or dispossessing the child heroes or heroines. Just to name a few such tales, some widely known, from the Brothers Grimm’s fairy tales⁶⁰: “Brother and Sister,” in which a little brother escapes with his little sister because their stepmother beats them every day; “Hansel and Gretel” in which the title protagonists are left by their father deep in the forest, upon the stepmother’s wicked counsel; “Snow White,” in which Princess Snow White is ousted and persecuted by her evil stepmother; “The Stepmother: A Fragment,” in which the “terribly evil mother-in-law” and old queen puts away her daughter-in-law, the young queen, and orders her children to be cooked; and “Stepmother,” in which a poor little boy is actually cooked and eaten by his hateful stepmother. As manifested by these tales, children of both sexes fall prey to the Opponent who enforces a leave-taking not only of the child protagonists but also of the narrative plots themselves. To grow up, children must leave home. The human subject, having left the real, has to learn to move on and function in the symbolic order. Perhaps these tales with the “wicked stepmother” as the Opponent best explain the transference work of the unconscious: these tales point to the hostility and aggressivity of the unconscious towards the unpleasant yet necessary departure from the real and entrance to the symbolic. Thus, instead of having the mother enforce the break, these narratives entail a “wicked” or “evil” stepmother to perform the task. Who would want to leave

⁶⁰ Jacob and Wilhelm Grimms first published their two volumes of 156 tales, collected and edited, in 1812 and 1815. For more details on the brothers and their work, consult renowned scholar and folklorist Jack Zipes’ fourth chapter, “Once There Were Two Brothers Named Grimm,” of his book *When Dreams Came True* (1999).

“home, sweet home,” *sweet home* being the order of the real symbolized, if the f/m(O)ther is ever benevolent, desiring, and respectful of the distance any human subject would need in his/her relation to the Other?⁶¹ How could plot kick off if there were no absence of any kind, be it forced upon or self-willed by the hero or heroine?

Hence, the Opponent has to be viciously powerful; this actant has to oppose. Don't we, however postmodern we are or pride ourselves on being, still find that the more the Opponent appears viciously powerful, the more we desire the triumph of the hero or heroine? Or, however sentimental this may sound (and even irritate us), are we not compelled to (secretly) acknowledge that, still, the more the lovers in a romantic plot are torn apart by Fate or some other character functioning as the Opponent, the more we desire their union in the end, irrespective of whatever end we can accept with satisfaction? The truth is: if we indeed desire as such, then the kernel of the matter here concerns *not* sentimentality, *but* freedom. As the Opponent frustrates and delimits the hero's or heroine's freedom to desire, we, simply as readers, postmodern or not, find ourselves partaking in the latter's struggle against such frustration or forfeiture. We desire as the hero or heroine desires for a freedom to desire precisely for the ontologically predetermined fact that we can never get our heart's *real* desire, except by way of (metaphoric) proxies in narrative or substitutes (substitutive signifiers) in reality.

Slavoj Žižk opportunely remarks, though not in narratological terms, the true significance of such a narrative actant as the Opponent when he clarifies Lacan's argument on the Lady-Object in courtly love:

⁶¹ Slavoj Žižk writes, “‘respect’ means that we maintain a proper distance, that we do not approach the other too closely: that is, so closely that we dissolve the semblance that conceals/envelops the lack and thus render this lack fully visible” (Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright, eds, 292).

The point, therefore, is not simply that we set up additional conventional hindrances in order to heighten the value of the object: external hindrances that thwart our access to the object are there precisely to create the illusion that without them, the object would be directly accessible—what such hindrances thereby conceal is the inherent impossibility of attaining the object. (*The Metastases of Enjoyment* 94)

Apropos of narrative structure as a *whole/hole*, the office of the Opponent sustains our postmodern sense of reality and silent acknowledgment of the impossibility of *the real*. That is to say, without this actant, the real symbolized by the unattainable object (in other words, the object being sublimated into becoming the Thing and signifying the real)⁶² would become immediately or too readily attainable, and we would understand (or easily discredit) such an effortless and seemingly perfect attainment as “fiction” or “fairy tales” (whose fictionality or fairy-tale semblance is too quickly equated with “unreality”) rather than “reality.” (The term “reality” is understood here, in Lacanian locution, as the symbolic order upholding a hole left by the real; in brief, the human psychical reality as such). *After all, what the Opponent opposes is not so much (the hero or heroine as) the narrative Subject as the fiction of an unmediated, un-circumvented attainment of human desire.* By means of opposition the Opponent ensures the circuitous movement of plot and evinces the circumventive nature of human desire. The power of this actant—the Opponent’s power of delay and deferral—enlivens absence,

⁶² “Sublimation,” as Lacan puts it, “raises an object [...] to the dignity of the Thing” (*The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 112). Courtly love is, “in effect, an exemplary form, a paradigm, of sublimation” (Ibid. 128). Lacan observes that the poetics of courtly love tends to deprive “the feminine object” of its substantiality and elevate it to the unattainability of the Thing, around which desire is organized: “[t]he object involved, the feminine object, is introduced oddly enough through the door of privation or of inaccessibility. Whatever the social position of him who functions in the role, the inaccessibility of the object is posited as a point of departure. [...]. In this poetic field the feminine object is emptied of all real substance” (Ibid. 149). For more of Lacan’s discussion of the relationship between sublimation and desire, consult the following chapters in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*: ch. VIII, “The object and the thing”; ch. X, “Marginal comments”; and ch. XI, “Courtly love as anamorphosis.”

supports the immanence and sublimity of the real, meanwhile empowers our imagination, and yields space (the “dilatatory space”) for our desire of the freedom to desire.

Claude Lévi-Strauss once remarked, “[i]t is, I think, absolutely impossible to conceive of meaning without order” (*Myth and Meaning* 12). Indeed, human desire does not operate without a logic or order of its own. Structured, its edifice is manifested by the structure of narrative and remains immanent in the structuration of narrativity (as in emplotment). Structuralist models such as A.-J. Greimas’ and Vladimir Propp’s help unveil the role of human desire in the relation between the narrative/human subject and the narrative object/*objet petit a*. They help illumine the dynamic relationships the actants hold with one another and the ways in which these dynamics contribute to the energetics of plot and to the overall meaning of narrative. Their significance and relevance apropos of the narrativity of the human mind should surpass post-structuralist critique of reductionism and, rather, continue to be regarded as worthy of exemplifying the connection between the subject of narration and that which is narrated.

Chapter Three: The Discourses and Orientations of Plot

We are familiar with a literary given: Aristotle's *Poetics* champions the primacy of plot in drama. Plot is that which distinguishes the nature and value of tragedy from those of comedy. The text itself shows that the Macedonian philosopher was more concerned with generic differences of poetics (namely, dramatic narratives such as tragedy, comedy, and epic) than with typical orientations of plot as defining features of narrative. In the mind of Aristotle, "some plots are simple, others complex" (18). Hence, we have plots of two kinds organized around "simple" and "complex" actions (the former containing "continuous and unified" actions without *reversal* or *recognition* and the latter involving either or both). Aristotle went ahead and named four kinds of tragedy for us: "complex tragedy, depending entirely on reversal and recognition; tragedy of suffering (e.g., plays about Ajax or Ixion); tragedy of character (e.g., *Women of Phthia*, and *Peleus*); and, fourth, simple tragedy (e.g., *Daughters of Phorcys*, *Prometheus* and plays set in the underworld)" (29). From this cataloguing we can argue that, though given unprecedented primacy, the significance of plot is subsumed and serviceable to that of a favored literary genre and the Aristotelian investigation of narrative elements (apropos of narrativity per se) to that of narrative *genres*. Indeed, it was genre theory, together with its centuries-old debate, that dominated the scene of literary interest and scholarship. Take Percy Bysshe Shelley's "In Defense of Poetry" (1821), for instance. Having long perched on the top of the ladder of genre hierarchy, poetry culminated in the era of Romanticism as "something divine," with poets pronounced to be "the unacknowledged legislators of the World." Then the theory of the novel rose to prominence led by Georg Lukács' *Theory of the Novel* (1920), Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), and followed by many others. But it was not until Mikhail Mikhailovich

Bakhtin (1895-19745) came on the scene that genre theory received its challenge and narrative theory took on a new shape.

Bakhtin problematizes past and present literary critics' reliance on the division of genre in thinking and theorizing about literature on the whole. In his essay "Epic and Novel," Bakhtin poignantly remarks:

The utter inadequacy of literary theory is exposed when it is forced to deal with the novel. In the case of other genres literary theory works confidently and precisely, since there is a finished and already formed object, definite and clear. These genres preserve their rigidity and canonic quality in all classical eras of their development; variations from era to era, from trend to trend or school to school are peripheral and do not affect their ossified generic skeleton. Right up to the present day, in fact, theory dealing with these already completed genres can add almost nothing to Aristotle's formulations. Aristotle's poetics, although occasionally so deeply embedded as to be almost invisible, remains the stable foundation for the theory of genres. Everything works as long as there is no mention of the novel. But the existence of novelized genres already leads theory into a blind alley. Faced with the problem of the novel, genre theory must submit to a radical re-structuring. (*Dialogic Imagination* 8)

In his other essay "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin observes that over time division of genres becomes a lamentably trivialized and trivializing matter of stylistic differences: "[t]he great historical destinies of genres are overshadowed by the petty vicissitudes of stylistic modifications, which in their turn are linked with individual artists and artistic movements" (259). As Michael Holquist points out in his introduction to this collection of Bakhtin's writings, "[t]he most immediate contribution these essays make is to the theory of the novel" (xxvi). Bakhtin, nevertheless, surpasses the fight for the novel as

one other canonized and ossified literary genre on the one hand and on the other as another static proper noun warehoused in the vocabulary of genre theory. Bakhtin sees the verb in “the novel,” instead. He distinguishes *language (heteroglossia)* and *discourse (dialogic modality)* as those quintessential elements in the novel that empower the genre of the novel to *novelize* other genres and to traverse from the terrain of genre theory to that of narrative theory.

Bakhtin’s emphasis on *language* and *discourse* in the novel significantly speaks to our concern of narrativity with its immanent energetics. If we agree that *plot* is the verb in narrative, then the dialogic imagination becomes immensely useful to our investigation of the workings of narrative plot in general. In this chapter I propose a new way of thinking and framing our discussion of plot, particularly the narrative middle. I would like to imagine a way in which differences in discourses shape and lead to differences in plot orientations, the latter of which would (re)configure the typology of narrative in general and across genres. In other words, I would like to argue that it is *language* and *discourse*, the motoring forces of plot, which come to shape and define the modalities of narrative texts. My approach will be different from Northrop Frye’s, for example. While Frye takes his cue from “a remark in Aristotle’s *Poetics*” (Balfour 24) and categorizes literature in five (historical) modes in terms of the hero’s or heroine’s *superiority* or *inferiority in kind* or *degree* to the rest of humankind, I take mine from Bakhtin’s and (predominantly from) Lacan’s discussions of language and discourses and bring their theses into contact with narrative and narrativity. By no means do I contend that a new model built on psychoanalysis should outweigh or outrun those built on other theoretical underpinnings. Nor do I attempt at a project like Frye’s, which accounts for the whole of literature in accordance with historical developments and movements. My intent here is

simply to introduce a different corpus of vocabulary⁶³ and therewith tease out new possibilities for rethinking generic boundaries (which, as Bakhtin argues, more than often result in reinforcing and rigidifying a generic hierarchy initially determined by historical and social conditions)—*and* narrative structuration motored by human desire across such boundaries.

In this chapter I propose three different modes of plot orientation—towards *the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real*—all on the basis of the four discourses crystallized in Lacan’s discourse theory: they are the discourses of the Master, the University, the Hysteric and the Analyst. I will introduce these four Lacanian discourses and use them to theorize about the three modes of plot orientation in the first two sections of the present chapter.⁶⁴ In the subsequent sections I will supply my reader with a discussion of sampled narrative texts—both fictional and theoretical—that differ in their plot orientation, discursive trajectory, and ensuing textual affectivity.

[I]

Four Primary Discourses in Lacanian Theory

As is desire, language and discourse are prominently featured in Lacan’s theorization about human behavior and the human mind. In his theory language, discourse, and

⁶³ I am inclined toward a vocabulary that steers away from such loaded locutions as “high [mimetic],” “low [mimetic],” “superior(ity),” and “inferior(ity)” used by Northrop Frye, or, “childish” and “virile” used by Georg Lukács in describing the epic and the novel, respectively. Ian Balfour, however, defends Frye well by arguing: “[w]hat critics of Frye fail to realize is that the ‘logic’ of literature is derived after the fact, from an inductive survey of literature” (25). Although Frye aims at cataloguing literature in accordance with historical developments and literary movements, and locutions such as “high” and “low” are used as “purely diagrammatic” markers (as Frye himself clarifies), still, such vocabulary, along with its powerful connotations, can hardly escape a(nother) hierarchization of genres in narratives.

⁶⁴ In these sections the readers will encounter rather long excerpts both from Lacan’s own teaching (as transcribed in his seminars) and from Lacanian psychoanalysts’ (or theorists’) further illuminations of Lacan’s discourse theory and other relevant teaching. My purpose of doing so is for my readers to get as much informed on necessary Lacanian concepts pertaining to my own narratological theorization later as possible (hence the long yet, hopefully, informing excerpts).

desire are inextricably linked and mutually interactive. The two most well-known Lacanian theses—“one’s desire is the desire of the Other” and “the unconscious is the discourse of the Other”—both point to one’s relations to others in an inescapably adhesive social web and to one’s language and discourse as crystallizations of such relations. Understanding and explaining Lacan well, Lacanian psychoanalyst Bruce Fink writes, “[d]iscourse is never one-dimensional. A slip of tongue immediately reminds us that more than one discourse can use the same mouthpiece at the same time” (*The Lacanian Subject* 3). Fink further elucidates Lacan’s two-fold notion that concerns not only the discourse of the Other but also the Other *qua language*: “Lacan’s Other is, at its most basic level, related to that *other kind of talk*” [Italics original] (Ibid. 3); “[i]t is the Other as the collection of all the words and expressions in a language” (Ibid. 5). If one’s *conscious* language and discourse are shaped and saturated by those of others (parents, institutions, traditions), one’s *unconscious* language and discourse are no less, if not more, so.

Throughout the years Lacan developed his ideas about human discourse and came up with a full-bodied schema of four primary modes of discourses. I am going to cite below a succinctly informative passage by Russell Grigg, who translated Lacan’s Seminar XVII and traced the development of the latter’s discourse theory:

The concept of discourse comes into particular prominence in Lacan’s work with the introduction of the four discourses. These were first announced by Lacan in 1968-69 in his Seminar XVI, “D’un Autre a l’autre.” However, it is during the seminar of the following year, *L’envers de la psychanalyse* (1969-70), that the theory of the four discourses is extensively elaborated and effectively becomes the theme of his seminar for that year. The theory was again further developed at length in 1972-73 in his seminar, *Encore*, and featured prominently in

“Radiophonie” in 1969 and in *Television* in 1973. (Huguette Glowinski, Zita Marks, and Sara Murphy, eds., 61)

In Seminar XVII, *L'envers de la psychanalyse* (translated as *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*), Lacan first explains what he means by “psychoanalysis upside down”:

Don't get the idea that this title owes anything to the current situation that thinks it is in the process of turning a number of places upside down. Let me give just the following as proof of this. In a text published in 1966—one of those introductions that I wrote at the time of the collection of my *Écrits*, and which punctuate it—a text called “de nos antécédents,” “On My Antecedents,” on page 68, I describe my discourse as being about, I say, a revival of the Freudian project upside down. It's thus written down well before the events—a *revival from the other direction* [*reprise par l'envers*]. [Italics original] (3)

Lacan goes on to explicate his notion of discourse, as opposed to utterance(s), and the function of discourse, preferably *without words*, in this “revival”:

The fact is that, in truth, discourse can clearly subsist without words. It subsists in a certain fundamental relation which would literally not be able to be maintained without language. Through the instrument of language a number of stable relations are established, inside which something that is much larger and goes much further than actual utterances [*enunciations*] can, of course, be inscribed. (Ibid. 3)

There are structures—we cannot describe them in any other way—for characterizing what can be extracted from this ‘in the form of’, one particular usage of which I took the liberty of stressing last year—namely, what happens by virtue of a fundamental relation, the one I define as the relation of one signifier to

another. And from this there results the emergence of what we call the subject—via the signifier which, as it happens, here functions as representing this subject with respect to another signifier. (Ibid. 3-4)

Note here an underlined relation between *discourse* and human *relations*. Just as Bakhtin maintains that, more than a matter of stylistics, “verbal discourse is a social phenomenon” (259), discourse, so Lacan teaches, subsists not so much in words as in relations (e.g., the subject’s relation to the Other and vice versa). Seen in this light, the four discourses represent (and signify) four primary modes of human relations. Slavoj Žižek puts it even better, bringing into the loop of the four discourses the intrinsic Lacanian notions of lack and absence:

What must not be forgotten here is that Lacan’s matrix of the four discourses is a matrix of the four possible positions in the intersubjective network of communication: we remain, here, within the field of communication as meaning [...]. What circulates between subjects in symbolic communication is ultimately lack—the constitutive absence itself—for it is this absence which opens up the space in which positive meaning can constitute itself. (Elizabeth Wright and Richard Wright, eds. 29)

With all this in mind, we can now go into the four discourses—of the Master, the University, the Analytic and the Analyst.⁶⁵ The discourses are comprised of four “mathème,” as Lacan calls them: $\$$ (the split or barred subject—split by acquisition of language between consciousness and the unconscious); a (object petit a, or, cause of desire); S_1 (the master signifier)⁶⁶; and S_2 (any signifier other than the master

⁶⁵ Capitalizations of Lacanian discourses are used for emphasis’ sake. If not emphasized as proper nouns, they will not be capitalized on such occasions in this project.

⁶⁶ S_1 refers to “[t]he master signifier or unary signifier; the signifier that commands or as commandment” (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 173). Bruce Fink explains the master signifier in the clinical setting: “As it appears concretely in the analytic situation, a master signifier presents

signifier).⁶⁷ In Lacan's four discourses, each of the four mathèmes takes up one of the following four positions and their respective functions: **agent**, **other** (that which the agent addresses or puts into question), **truth** (or knowledge), and **production** (or loss, depending on the mode of discourse). The four discourses bespeak four configurations of the above-mentioned four mathèmes in those four offices. The entire system undergoes a 90° turn counterclockwise of the mathèmes and yields the four modes of discourses accordingly. Thus, the discourses appear as follows:

agent → other
truth production/loss

The Discourse of the Master

S1 → S2
\$ a

The Discourse of the University

S2 → a
S1 \$

The Discourse of the Analyst

a → \$
S2 S1

The Discourse of the Hysteric

\$ → S1
a S2

itself as a dead end, a stopping point, a term, word, or phrase that puts an end of association, that grinds the patient's discourse to a halt. [...], it could be a proper name (the patient's or the analyst's), a reference to the death of a loved one, the name of a disease (AIDS, cancer, psoriasis, blindness), or a variety of things. The task of analysis is to bring such master signifiers into relation with other signifiers, that is, to dialectize the master signifiers it produces" (Ibid. 135).

⁶⁷ S₂ refers to "[a]ny other signifier, or all other signifiers. In the four discourses, it represents knowledge as a whole" (Fink, *The Lacanian Subject*, 173).

The Discourse of the Master

$\underline{S1} \rightarrow \underline{S2}$
 $\$ \quad a$

In *Seminar XVII*, Lacan embarks on explicating his discourse schema with the discourse of the Master, and not without significant historical and other socio-cultural implications in mind. Human civilization, if not also the human tale, began with the dominance of the master's discourse. Lacan himself refers to a historical urgency of the discourse of the Master in his discourse theory:

It's no accident that I presented this form to you as the first. There is no reason why I could not have begun with any of the others, with the second for instance. But it is a fact, determined by historical reasons, that this initial form—the one that we express by starting with this signifier that represents a subject with respect to another signifier—has a very special importance [...]. (*Seminar XVII* 14)

Bruce Fink further elucidates:

Lacan's discourses begin in a sense with the discourse of the master, both for historical reasons and because it embodies the alienating functioning of the signifier to which we are all subject. As such, it holds a privileged place in the four discourses; it constitutes a sort of primary discourse (both phylogenetically and ontologically). It is the fundamental matrix of the coming to be of the subject through alienation. (*The Lacanian Subject* 130)⁶⁸

In the discourse of the Master, the master signifier (S1) occupies the position of the agent and this signifying function is that which “the essence of the master relies upon” (*Seminar XVII* 15). According to Lacan, the master as S1 addresses the slave as S2 in

⁶⁸ Fink's chapter “The Four Discourses” is immensely illuminating on the schema of Lacan's discourse theory. See this chapter in *The Lacanian Subject* 129-37.

order to solicit the knowledge the master himself does not possess. The slave as the other (or Other) is the locus of knowledge, and Lacan asks us to turn to Aristotle's *Politics* for proof: "read Aristotle's *Politics* on this—what I am claiming about the slave as being characterized as the one who is the support of knowledge"; the slave "is the one who has the know-how [*savoir-faire*]" (Ibid.). The master addresses the slave with authority in one hand and dominance in the other, veiling the truth that the master, too, is a split and castrated subject (thus we have the mathème \$ on the lower left corner of the scheme, signifying, specifically, the veiled truth in the Master's discourse). Or, as Fink puts it, "[t]he master must show no weakness, and therefore carefully hides the fact that he or she, like everyone else, is a being of language and has succumbed to symbolic castration" (*The Lacanian Subject* 131). Articulated knowledge is able to be "transmitted from the slave's pocket to the master's—assuming they had pockets in those days" (*Seminar XVII* 16). Hence, the discourse of the Master, as Lacan pinpoints, "is all about finding the position that makes it possible for knowledge to become the master's knowledge"; "[i]t is a matter of extracting the essence of this knowledge in order for it to become the master's knowledge"; "it is only a matter of robbing the slave of his function at the level of knowledge" (Ibid. 16, 17).

All this—transmission, extraction, robbery, or appropriation of the other's knowledge for one's own use—does not mean that the master is driven here by a burning desire to know. Rather than being an end in itself, the pursuit of knowledge in the master's discourse is nothing more than a downright business about obtaining knowledge as means for production. Lacan makes it clear that "[a] real master, as in general we used to see until a recent era, and this is seen less and less, doesn't desire to know anything at all—he desires that things work" (*Seminar XVII* 19). The slave's desire, in this case, becomes the desire of the master, a historically grounded fact beckoning Lacan's thesis

that *one's desire is the desire of the Other*: "it is clear that the master's desire is the Other's desire, since it's this desire that the slave anticipates" (Ibid. 16). For all these reasons, Lacan associates the master's discourse with capitalism. But Lacan's critique of capitalism differs from Marx's in that the proletariat, as Lacan argues, "has been dispossessed of something" in the first place and that something is his or her *knowledge*, even prior to the proletariat's dispossession of "communal property" (Ibid. 5). There is more at stake here than dispossession of materiality as the basis of human existence and subsistence, and Lacan states, "[c]apitalist exploitation effectively frustrates him of his knowledge by rendering it useless" (Ibid. 6). In other words, the proletariat is dispossessed of a rightful enjoyment of his or her knowledge. Enjoyment as such becomes the enjoyment of the master, thanks to the latter's masterly maneuvers or capitalistic exploitation. Therefore, we have what Lacan calls "surplus jouissance," modeled on and extending Marx's term, "surplus value," in the lower right corner of the scheme as gain for the master/capitalist and loss for the slave/proletarian with the discourse of the Master. Lacan notes: "Marx denounces this process as spoliation. Only, he does it without noticing that its secret is located in knowledge itself, just as the secret of the reduction of the worker himself is to be no longer anything but a value. [...]. The worker is only a unit of value—an indication for those for whom the term produces an echo"; furthermore, "[w]hat Marx denounces in surplus value is the spoliation of jouissance. And yet, this surplus value is a memorial to surplus jouissance, its equivalent of surplus jouissance" (Ibid. 17, 18). It should be clear now as to why, to reiterate, the discourse of the Master heads the schema of Lacan's discourse theory: not only does it verify a historical antecedent, but it also testifies to one's alienation from his or her jouissance in the symbolic order presided over by the master as Other.

The Discourse of the University

$$\begin{array}{l} \underline{S2} \rightarrow \underline{a} \\ S1 \quad \$ \end{array}$$

For Lacan, an ever staunch and relentless challenger of university and institutional establishment (such as the IPA and other psychoanalytic organizations), the discourse of the University functions as the mouthpiece of the Master's discourse: it supports, affirms, upholds, and continues the logic inherent in the discourse of the Master. Here we have the master (S1) as the founding truth of the discourse of the University (thus taking up the position in the lower left corner), and *knowledge* (S2), together with its systemized and systemizing methodology, as the agent that commands the discourse of the University (thus the position of the agent in the top left corner). The knowledge instilled and instituted by the university (or institution as such) addresses one's desire to know (thus *a* in the position of the other in the top right corner), yet acquisition of such knowledge only further rigidifies the subject's split existence (between rationalized consciousness and the unconscious) and keeps on producing split subjects in and for the symbolic order (thus \$, the barred or split subject, in the lower right corner, signifying both that which is produced and lost within the discourse of the University). That is to say, the more we enter and adopt the discourse of the University, the more we are distanced from the real and assimilated into the symbolic—and, consequently, the more we desire the desire of the Other with our unconscious becoming saturated with or structured by the discourse of that Other.

In the same seminar (*Seminar XVII*), Lacan names philosophy as one discourse of the University that serves and fortifies the Master's discourse. Lacan argues:

Philosophy in its historical function is this extraction, I would almost say this betrayal, of the slave's knowledge, in order to obtain its transmutation into the

master's knowledge. [...]. This wisdom, this episteme, created with every recourse to every dichotomy, led only to knowledge that can be designated by the term that Aristotle himself used to characterize the master's knowledge-theoretical knowledge. (17)

Lacan further questions, "who can deny that philosophy has ever been anything other than a fascinating enterprise for the master's benefit? At the other extreme we have Hegel's discourse, with its outrageous absolute knowledge, as it's called. What can this absolute knowledge possibly mean [...]" (Ibid. 18)? Can knowledge be absolute, after all? Tracing the footsteps of Freud, Lacan interrogates such "tyranny of knowledge" or "totality of knowledge" as that which has been targeted and hankered after by philosophers for centuries (Ibid. 6, 7). In psychoanalytic truth, knowledge "comes in bits" from the unconscious, resisting logical coherence, consistency, and totality. Lacan puts forth again:

[K]nowledge is something spoken, something that is said. Well then, knowledge that speaks all by itself—that's the unconscious. [...] Freud stresses what everyone is capable of knowing—knowledge comes in bits, knowledge is enumerable, it comes in parcels, and—this is what isn't self-evident—what is said, the litany, is not said by anyone, it unfolds of its own accord. (2-3)

Philosophy, on the other hand, as one discourse of the University can only alienate the (speaking and thinking) subject from his or her unconscious, the well of (self-)knowledge, and endorse the subject to exist solely as the self-rationalizing *cogito*, veiling the truth that the human subject is first and foremost a split being. This philosophical orientation toward the *cogito* is, as Lacan critiques, "what the subject is missing in thinking he is exhaustively accounted for by his *cogito*—he is missing what is unthinkable about him"

(*Écrits* 304).⁶⁹ The fallacy of the Cartesian dictum, *cogito ergo sum*, lies in a hazardous reduction of the being of the subject to that of the ego and consciousness. In his address to students of philosophy (February 19, 1966), Lacan accentuates: although “[t]he subject is not wrong to identify with his consciousness,” there is “the danger of a reduction of the subject to the *ego*” [Italics original] (*Television* 109).

Worse (at least for Lacan), the discourse of the University may, in the name of (inculcating) knowledge, lead to forfeiture of the subject’s subjectivity altogether and not otherwise. It may come in handy for the Master’s discourse by churning out human beings as products, stamped with ideologies yet stripped of *being*. In another address to students at the University of Paris VIII-Vincennes on December 3, 1969, Lacan spoke out without reserve:

You are the products of the University and you prove that you are surplus value, if only in this: what you not only consent to but actually applaud—and I don’t see why I would object to it—is that you yourselves emerge from it, equal to more or less credits [*unités de valeur*]. You come here to turn yourselves into units of credit: you leave here stamped “Units of Credits.” (*Television* 121)

The discourse of the University, in this sense, accelerates and reinforces what he calls the *aphanisis* of the subject, namely the *disappearance* of the subject.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ See also this other comment by Lacan: “The promotion of consciousness as essential to the subject in the historical aftermath of the Cartesian cogito is indicative, to my mind, of a misleading emphasis on the transparency of the *I* in action at the expense of the opacity of the signifier that determines it” (*Écrits* 295).

⁷⁰ Dylan Evans explains: “The literal meaning of this Greek term is ‘disappearance’. It was first introduced into psychoanalysis by Ernest Jones, who uses it to mean ‘the disappearance of sexual desire’ (Jones, 1927). For Jones, the fear of *aphanisis* exists in both sexes, giving rise to the castration complex in boys and to penis envy in girls. Lacan takes up Jones’s term, but modifies it substantially. For Lacan, *aphanisis* does not mean the disappearance of desire, but the disappearance of the subject (see S11, 208)” (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 12). For more discussion about the intricate relation between *cogito*-thinking and the *aphanisis* of the subject, see Lacan’s own writing “Aphanisis” (*Écrits* 216-29).

Lacan is and remains throughout his life sharply skeptical not only of the discourse of the University. He questions the nature of students' and intellectuals' (including the Marxists') aspirations for revolution as well. In the same address at Vincennes Lacan spells out: "I would tell you that the aspiration to revolution has but one conceivable issue, always, the discourse of the master. That is what experience has proved. What you, as revolutionaries, aspire to is a Master. You will have one" (*Television* 126). Here (hand in hand with *Seminar XVII*) Lacan refers and responds not merely to the student movement in Paris in May 1968. He speaks of revolution in general.⁷¹ Elisabeth Roudinesco furnishes us with more details:

This new theory of discourse only echoed the question that had haunted Lacan ever since his discussions with Bataille and at the college of Sociology, and since his answer to Sartre's *Huis clos* in 1945: How do the masses come to love their tyrants? Why is "liberation" impossible without law? In other words, in confrontation with Sartre and in the direct line of Foucault's teaching, Lacan was still putting the question about the essence of human freedom from the point of view of Freudianism: how can a subject claim to be free when he is determined by the existence of an unconscious that prevents him from being free in word or deed but never prevents him from engaging in a struggle for freedom? And so on. (*Jacques Lacan* 346)

As for the events of May, he [Lacan] pointed out that the student protest had led to the abolition of the ancient university function of the master or teacher and its replacement by a tyrannical system based on the idea of communication and the pedagogical relationship. He couldn't have spoken a truer word: it is clear today

⁷¹ For more details about the event of May 1968 and discussions of Lacan's attitude toward revolution on the whole, see Elisabeth Roudinesco's chapter "Revolution: Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Lacan, Alternate Contemporaries" (*Jacques Lacan* 332-48).

that the revolution of the barricades was one of the key stages in the university's replacement of intellectuals by technocrats. (Ibid. 347)

Indeed, for Lacan, true revolution and pursuit of human freedom do not subsist in replacing one (university or school of) discourse by another, when all discourses as such serve and call for nothing else but the master and the master's discourse only. True revolution and progress of humanity, as Lacan suggests, should instead begin with deep questioning of discourse per se as well as the being of the human subject. Lacan ends his address at Vincennes by remarking:

I am liberal, like everyone else, only in so far as I am antiprogressive. With the single modification that I am caught in a movement which deserves to be called progressive, for it is progressive to see the discourse of psychoanalysis achieve its foundation in so far as it completes the circle that might perhaps allow you to situate what precisely is at stake, what it is that you are rebelling against. Which [sic] will not at all prevent it from continuing, smashingly well [...]. (*Television* 128)

The discourses of the Master and the University are no real answers to the subject's pursuit of self-knowledge, let alone the confounding truth of human existence fraught with dilemmas, paradoxes, and enigmatic desires. To bring in Bakhtin here, we can say that the discourses of the Master and the University function as does a "unitary language." Bakhtin defines that "[a] unitary language is not something given [*dan*] but is always in essence posited [*zadan*]*—and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia*"; its forces "are *the forces that serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world*" [Italics original] (270). In like manner, the discourses of the Master and the University are *posited* in the subject by the symbolic order (and Other), both endeavoring to *unify and centralize* that which is born (with) a hole, a gap, an

absence, and a lack. And now we turn to the last two of Lacan's discourse theory—the discourses of the Hysteric and the Analyst—which differ from the first two discourses (again, to use Bakhtin's terms here) in their “centrifugal,” as opposed to “centripetal,” forces that serve to *decentralize and disunify*.⁷²

The Discourse of the Hysteric

$\$ \rightarrow S_1$
 $a \quad S_2$

Lacan tells us that we learn and gain much more truth and knowledge about ourselves from the discourse of the Hysteric than from that of the University, for instance. He reminds us that, after all, it was the hysterics (Anna O., Emma, Dora, the butcher's wife) who questioned the analyst and gave birth to Freud's discovery about the enigma of human desire and, to top it all, the unconscious.⁷³ In this discourse, we have the hysteric as the split subject (\$) who questions the master, or the master signifier (S₁), when the analyst takes the place and is, in the fact of the analytic setting, placed by the hysteric herself in the position of the master.⁷⁴ In the mind of the hysteric, the analyst is, as

⁷² In Bakhtinian terms, a unitary language contains “centripetal forces and tendencies” that “serve to centralize and unify the verbal-ideological world,” whereas heteroglossia contains “centrifugal, stratifying forces” that serve to “decentralize and disunify” the world as such (*Dialogic Imagination* 270, 272). For a more complete discussion by Bakhtin himself, see *Dialogic Imagination* 269-75.

⁷³ Bruce Fink adds: “Historically speaking, hysterics have been a true motor force behind the medical, psychiatric, and psychoanalytic elaboration of theories concerning hysteria. Hysterics led Freud to develop psychoanalytic theory and practice, all the while proving to him in his consulting room the inadequacy of his knowledge and know-how” (*The Lacanian Subject* 134). For historical and clinical reasons, the hysteric is generally referred to as “she”. Nevertheless, Lacan reminds us that “[i]n saying ‘she,’ we are making the hysteric a woman, but this is not her privilege alone. Many men get themselves analyzed who, by this fact alone, are obliged to pass through the hysteric's discourse, since this is the law, the rule of the game” (*Seminar XVII* 8-9). In keeping with the psychoanalytic tradition, I continue the customary use of the female *gender* when referring to the hysteric in this project.

⁷⁴ I owe my understanding of the hysteric in the analytic setting, in tandem with her clinical structure, to Bruce Fink's invaluable *Clinical Introduction of Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (1997). Different from the obsessive/obsessional, though a neurotic as well, the hysteric is “after all, extremely attentive to the Other's desire [...]. But in addition to expecting being from the Other, she also expects knowledge: she looks to the Other to fill her lack of being

Lacan pinpoints, *le sujet supposé savoir*, i.e., *the subject supposed to know*; the analyst is (expected by the hysteric to be) the master who knows and possesses the knowledge the hysteric would very much like and often attempt to take for her own.⁷⁵ Relying on the bases of Lacan's teaching and his own analytic experience, Bruce Fink writes:

[T]he hysteric pushes the master—incarnated in a partner, teacher, or whomever—to the point where he or she can find the master's knowledge lacking. Either the master does not have an explanation for everything, or his or her reasoning does not hold water. In addressing the master, the hysteric demands that he or she produce knowledge and then goes on to disprove his or her theories. (*The Lacanian Subject* 134)

Lacan himself emphasizes that “the hysteric is not a slave. [...]. She, in her way, goes on a kind of strike. She doesn't give up her knowledge. She unmasks [...] the function of the master” and unveils the truth that the master, too, is castrated, split, and incapable of whole being and whole knowledge; that the master is *the castrated master*, contrary to the image he would like to uphold in front of the slave as in the discourse of the Master (*Seminar XVII* 15).

(or want-to-be) and lack of knowledge (or want-to-know). This is what makes it easy for her to request the analyst's help—she recognizes her dependence on the Other—but makes it difficult for her to work once she is in analysis” (132). Fink further remarks: “Analysts often find hysterics very challenging to work with, having the sense that they are never far enough ahead of the hysteric's understanding of the situation, that they never have enough new knowledge with which to appease the hysteric's insatiable appetite. Analysts who play the game of feeding knowledge to the analysand sooner or later learn that it is the hysteric who always wins that game: she becomes the master of the analyst's knowledge, making the analyst produce that knowledge as fast as he or she can. [...]. In her position as the one who points out or demonstrates the lack in the Other's knowledge, she becomes a living exception or enigma, always one step ahead of any known theory or technique” (Ibid.).

⁷⁵ Again, I owe this statement to Bruce Fink who points out, “[t]he subject supposed to know something of importance in psychoanalysis is the analysand's unconscious,” yet “[t]he subject supposed to know—that is, the unconscious ‘within’ the analysand—is rejected by the analysand and projected onto the analyst. The analyst must agree to occupy the space of or stand in (or sit in) for the unconscious—to make the unconscious present through his or her presence” (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 30, 31).

This interplay between the hysteric and the Other (including the analyst) as master finds its evidence in the clinical setting.⁷⁶ The hysteric is clinically structured as a successfully castrated and symbolized subject who recognizes both *alienation* from the fOther and *separation* from the mOther. (In contrast, the psychotic never undergoes *alienation* as the first step toward symbolization/castration in the first place and thus recognizes no *Nom/Non du Père*. The pervert, like the hysteric, experiences *alienation* and has *le Nom/Non du Père* instituted in his being, yet he, unlike the hysteric, does not undergo *separation* as the second step toward symbolization/castration). The hysteric, though having undergone both steps, takes up a particular stance toward *separation*: “Separation leads the hysteric to grasp her own loss in terms of her mOther’s loss, the falling away of the object she had been for her mOther. She senses that her mother is not complete as mOther without her child, and constituted herself as the object necessary to make the mOther whole or complete” (Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, 120). In other words, the hysteric constitutes herself as *the objet petit a*, or *the cause of the desire of the Other*. Accordingly, Fink remarks:

The hysteric [...] emphasizes the partner or Other, making herself into the objet of the Other’s desire so as to master it. [...]. Indeed, the hysteric orchestrates things in such a way as to ensure that the Other’s desire remains unsatisfied, leaving the hysteric a permanent role as object [better: as object petit a]. [...] Lacan goes so far as to define the hysteric’s stance by saying that hysteria is characterized by an *unsatisfied desire* (Seminar VIII, 425). [Italics original] (Ibid. 123)

In this sense, knowledge becomes a means of enjoyment for the hysteric in her relation to the Other as master (or the master as Other).

⁷⁶ Once again, I base information contained in this paragraph on Fink’s illustration. See Fink’s chapter “Neurosis” (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 112-64) for a complete discussion of the hysteric vis-à-vis the obsessive in terms of differences in their clinical structures.

Unlike the slave, the hysteric does not offer up her knowledge to the master, thereby feeding the Other with *satisfied desire*. On the contrary, the hysteric vies with the master for knowledge and therein constitutes herself as *the* objet petit a for the master. The truth is, in questioning and challenging the analyst as master, the hysteric herself yields more knowledge by dint of her unconscious (thus we have knowledge as S2 in the lower right corner as that which is produced in the Hysteric's discourse). The hysteric is driven by *a* (objet petit a; in her case, [the desire to be] the cause of the analyst-as-Other's desire), and this bespeaks the hysteric's truth pointing beyond the symbolic to the real (thus we have *a* in the position of [veiled] truth in the left lower corner). Unlike the discourse of the University, the Hysteric's discourse is anything but clear-cut, coherent, centralized, and unified. Her discourse is rather enigmatic and fraught with "half-saids" [*mi-dires*]. Or, as Lacan puts it, "[w]hat hysterics ultimately want one to know is that language runs off the rails concerning the magnitude of what she as woman is capable of revealing concerning enjoyment" (*Seminar XVII* 10). Thus, while the discourse of the University comprises ready-made and ideologically-oriented *statements*, the Hysteric's discourse subsists in *utterances*, and *enigmas are utterances* (Ibid. 14). The Hysteric's discourse opens up and reveals holes, gaps, lacks, and absences in language, whereas the discourses of the University and the Master hide, ignore, or gloss over them. The Hysteric's discourse is of such value concerning the truth and knowledge it can offer us all that, at one point, Lacan goes so far as to question Freud himself: "Why did he [Freud] substitute this myth [the myth of Oedipus], for the knowledge that he gathered from all these mouths of gold, Anna, Emma, Dora" (Ibid. 25)?

The Hysteric's discourse as enigmatic utterance(s) is not all. Lacan further comments that at the level of the Hysteric's discourse, it is the symptom that comes to the fore (and symptoms, as we learned from Freud and Lacan, are the tell-tale hearts of split subjects):

“It is around the symptom that how it is with the discourse of the hysteric is situated and ordered” (*Seminar XVII* 10). The Hysteric’s discourse, driven by *objet petit a* and revealed in symptoms, escapes rational signification and circulates around *the real* (that which is lacking and impossible to articulate). In this light, the discourse of the Hysteric anticipates and calls for the discourse of the Analyst—the meanings of her enigmatic “half-saids” need unpacking in order to hit the core of her being, and the analyst is in the position of facilitating that process.

The Discourse of the Analyst

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{a} & \rightarrow & \underline{\$} \\ S_2 & & S_1 \end{array}$$

The discourse of the Master “has only one counterpoint, the analytic discourse” (*Seminar XVII* 3). Lacan calls our attention to the exactly diagonal opposition of each *mathème* in these two schema: for instance, what is in the place of the agent (S1) in the Master’s discourse is now in the place of production in the Analyst’s discourse, and what is in the place of (hidden) truth in the former discourse (\$) takes the position of the other in the latter. If we place the two discursive schemas side by side, the change, or I should say, transformation, becomes transparent and self-evident:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{S_1} & \rightarrow & \underline{S_2} \\ \$ & & a \end{array} \quad \text{(The discourse of the Master)}$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \underline{a} & \rightarrow & \underline{\$} \\ S_2 & & S_1 \end{array} \quad \text{(The discourse of the Analyst)}$$

The discourse of the Analyst aims at foregrounding *objet petit a*, that which causes the subject’s desire; that which points to the real, so to speak. The network of signifiers which contains and yields knowledge (S2) now serves the agent (*a*) and becomes the support of truth that would eventually give rise to the master signifier (S1) as that which is produced in the Analyst’s discourse. The master is dethroned and the split subject is

here in this discourse properly addressed. *This is the inherent logic (and discursive dynamics) of the Analyst's discourse: it aims at facilitating the human subject to come up with his or her own master signifier—that which the subject (unconsciously or subconsciously) desire to name, articulate, signify, or return to via language.* And this Analyst's discursive function—and objective—is (as I already hinted in the introduction and will later repeat in this project) what narrative—in its best case—does for us *reading and desiring* human subjects. But now let us go back to Lacan's discourse of the Analyst.

The question, then, is: how does or should the analyst function in the Analyst's discourse? Lacan posits that “[t]he analyst makes himself the cause of the analysand's desire” (*Seminar XVII* 16). Bruce Fink confirms Lacan's insight and elaborates by means of clinical experience that, in the analytic setting, the analyst should strive at turning him- or herself into this *objet petit a*—the *cause* of the analysand's desire—and at functioning accordingly.⁷⁷ If the analysand sees the analyst as another *person* like him- or herself, *both* the analysand *and* the analyst would end up being trapped in an imaginary relation which more than often results first in imitation and then in rivalry. Fink explains:

In the course of the preliminary meetings, the analyst must allow a shift to occur in the analysand's mind: the analyst must shift from being an other person to being an other (“person” under erasure [*sous rature*]). In other words, the “person” of the analyst must disappear if he or she is to stand in for the unconscious. He or she must become a more abstract other, the other that seems to speak inadvertently, in the slips and cracks in the analysand's discourse.

[Italics original] (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 31)

⁷⁷ For a useful and elucidating discussion about the role and function of the analyst in the analytic relationship with the analysand, see Fink's chapter “The Analytic Relationship” (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 28-41).

Otherwise, as Fink cautions:

When the analyst is viewed by the analysand as just another person like anyone else—that is, as similar to the analysand—the analysand is likely to compare him- or herself to the analyst, seeing him- or herself in the analyst, imitating the analyst, and ultimately competing with the analyst. The relationship that arises in this situation is characterized by Lacan as predominantly imaginary. By qualifying it as “imaginary,” Lacan does not mean that the relationship does not exist; he means that it is dominated by the analysand’s self-image and the image he or she forms of the analyst. [...]. As the analysand measures him- or herself against his or her image of the analyst, the foremost question is, “Am I better or worse, superior or inferior.” *Imaginary relations are dominated by rivalry*, the kind of rivalry most of us are familiar with from sibling rivalry. [Italics original] (Ibid. 32)

It is at the level of imaginary relations that analysts who are concerned with acting the part of the master of knowledge are challenged, if not unseated, by their analysands, such analysts mistaking their authority as representatives of the unconscious with the authority associated with keeping the upper hand. In other words, the ultimate authority in the analytic situation lies, to their minds, in the “person” of the analyst, and they thus set out to prove to their analysands that they know more than their analysands, and attempt to establish their power on that basis. (Ibid. 32)

Namely, “the less concrete and distinct the analyst seems to the analysand, the easier it is to use him or her as a blank screen [and for the analysand’s unconscious to show or tell]” (Ibid. 32). The analyst should exist in the Analyst’s discourse as a *function*, rather than be conceptualized by the analysand (particularly the hysteric analysand) as a flesh-and-blood person or a persona, let alone a “dramatized” persona.

The analyst should also take care that s/he will not be viewed by the analysand as the symbolic Other, for the Other as such only gives rise to avatars of the master (or Master with a capital “M”), wielding taming authority with one hand and castrating power with the other (given that the symbolic order is that which both castrates and symbolizes). If there should be *any* master at all in the Analyst’s discourse, that master would be the analysand him-/herself, or, to be more precise, his/her *unconscious*. Fink remarks, “[t]he ‘final authority’ in the analytic setting thus resides in the analysand’s unconscious, not in the analyst as some sort of master of knowledge who immediately grasps what the analysand is saying and the meaning of his or her symptoms” (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 31). He further states, “[t]hus, the goal of analysis, as Lacan conceptualized it in the early 1950s, is to pierce through the imaginary dimension which veils the symbolic and confront the analysand’s relations to the Other head on” (Ibid. 35).

Neither as an imaginary counterpart (the other) nor as the symbolic locus (the Other) to the analysand, the analyst functions as facilitator of the real. The analyst facilitates the analysand’s own task (and responsibility) of touching base with the real. Or, as Fink puts it, “[w]hen the analyst is viewed as the cause of the analysand’s unconscious formations, the analyst can be considered a ‘real’ object for the analysand (which is denoted by the expression ‘object *a*’ [sic]” (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 38-39). All in all, “[t]he analyst in the position of *cause* of desire for the analysand is, according to Lacan, the *motor force of analysis*” [Italics original] (Ibid. 39). It is only then that what Fink calls the “dialectization of desire”—based on Lacan’s “dialectic of desire”—can be initiated into process (and Fink’s Lacanian term, the “dialectization of desire,” will feature an important part in my own theorization about plot orientation in the later sections of this current chapter).

Fink reminds us that “Lacan’s use of the term ‘dialectic’ here [as in the ‘dialectic of desire’] does not mean that desire follows the widely taught version of Hegel’s dialectic—affirmation, negation, synthesis; it means that *desire is set in motion, set free of the fixation inherent in demand*. This is a momentous step, and it signals the analysand’s true entry into analysis” (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 26). In the essay “The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious” (1960), Lacan comments on the “lack” in the Hegelian dialectic, and I quote the following passage in its entire length:

For let us reexamine from this angle the service we expect from Hegel’s phenomenology: that of making out an ideal solution—one that involves a permanent revisionism, so to speak, in which what is disturbing about truth is constantly being reabsorbed, truth being in itself but what is lacking in the realization of knowledge. The antinomy the Scholastic tradition posited as principle is here taken to be resolved by virtue of being imaginary. Truth is nothing but what knowledge can learn that it knows merely by putting its ignorance to work. This is a real crisis, in which the imaginary is eliminated in engendering a new symbolic form, to use my own categories. This dialectic is convergent and proceeds to the conjuncture defined as absolute knowledge. As it is deduced, this conjuncture can only be the conjunction of the symbolic with a real from which nothing more can be expected. What is this, if not a subject finalized in his self-identity? From which one can conclude that this subject is already perfect(ed) here and is the fundamental hypothesis of the entire process. He is named, in effect, as the substratum of this process; he is called *Selbstbewusstsein*, the being of the conscious, wholly conscious itself. (*Écrits* 285)

Lacan’s critique of the Hegelian dialectic harks back to his earlier criticism of the Cartesian cogito. To Lacan, both the Hegelian dialectic and the cogito point to the

symbolization yet meanwhile the *aphanisis* (or disappearance) of the subject (as *de facto* split, untotalizable and opaque). Lacan further suggests that Hegel himself could not escape “being the subject who, regarding history, adopts the discourse of absolute knowledge,” or, the discourse of the University, so to speak (*Écrits* 289). What the Hegelian dialectic *lacks* is a due address to *the cut* in the being of the subject, and, as Lacan voices, “[I]est our hunt be in vain, we analysts must bring everything back to the cut qua function in discourse, the most significant being the cut that constitutes a bar between the signifier and the signified. [...]. The cut made by the signifying chain is the only cut that verifies the structure of the subject as a discontinuity in the real” (Ibid. 288).

Unlike the one-way discourses of the Master and the University, the Analyst’s discourse dialogues with the Hysteric’s discourse (vice versa) and in doing so dialectizes the desire of the speaking and thinking subject. Attention is paid not only to the “half-said” but also to the “inter-said” [*inter-dit*]⁷⁸ between the analysand and the analyst when neither discourse subsists in clear-cut and transparent *statements*. Fink further advises that the analyst wean the analysand off his or her dependence on the former for demands (as in an imaginary relation) and desires (as in a symbolic relation). *The analyst should function as pure “desirousness” for the analysand*: “Maintaining his or her constant enigmatic desire for something else, the Lacanian analyst aims, not at modeling the analysand’s desire on his or her own, but rather at shaking up the configuration of the analysand’s fantasy, changing the subject’s relation to the cause of desire: object *a*” (*The Lacanian Subject* 62). At its best, the analyst’s discourse facilitates

⁷⁸ Lacan notes that “the place of the ‘inter-said’ [*inter-dit*], constituted by the ‘intra-said’ [*intra-dit*] of a between-two-subject, is the very place at which the transparency of the classical subject divides, undergoing, as it does, the effects of fading that specify the Freudian subject due to its occultation by an ever purer signifier; may these effects lead us to the frontiers where slips of the tongue and jokes become indistinguishable in their collusion, or even where elision is so much more allusive in driving presence back to its lair, that we are astonished the hunt for Dasein hasn’t made any more of it” (*Écrits* 287-88).

both *the dialectization of desire* and *the traversing of fantasy* on the part of the split subject. While Fink based his locution “dialectization of desire” on Lacan’s “dialectic of desire,” he coined the phrase “traversing of fantasy” to illumine a more complete, hence more desirable, analytic process. *According to Fink, the subject’s traversing of fantasy signals the step toward self-subjectivization.* When the subject undertakes to reconfigure his or her fantasy in relation to l’objet petit a, then the subject could hope for or can actually find a way out of traumatic fixation. In Fink’s own words, “[t]he traversing of fantasy involves the subject’s assumption of a new position with respect to the Other as language and the Other as desire. A move is made to invest or inhabit that which brought him or her into existence as split subject, to become that which *caused* him or her”; in even more ideal scenarios, “[t]he traversing of fantasy is the process by which the subject subjectifies trauma, takes the traumatic event upon him or herself, and assumes responsibility for that *jouissance*” (Ibid. 62, 63).

Indeed, if we see the discourse of the Analyst both in Lacan’s and in Fink’s terms, then the interconnection among *objet petit a*, *the real* and *jouissance* again becomes lucidly formidable. With the analyst functioning as objet petit a, the Analyst’s discourse traverses beyond the imaginary and the symbolic orders and aims at returning to the real (or, at least, the production of the master signifier that matters the most to each individual analysand). Discourse as such helps bring the subject back to touch base with his or her relation to and quest of *jouissance*, that which ex-ists and underlies the stratification of desires and the signification of signifiers. The discourses of the Hysteric and the Analyst are discourses that open up lacunae in meaning and engage dialogic imagination in pursuit of truth and knowledge of being. Such discourses invite disruptions, discontinuities, and incongruities. They (re)examine presence on the basis of absence and profusion on the basis of lack.

Final Words on the Four Lacanian Discourses

*The four discourses of Lacan's discourse theory bespeak four primary modes of human relations and communications. By no means does this, along with Lacan himself, argue that other discursive and relational modes do not exist.*⁷⁹ Lacan formulated a schema as such to address issues that fascinated him: namely, one's relation to the o/Other,⁸⁰ to knowledge, to truth, and to one's own being (subjecthood, subject formation, and the like). As Fink helps clarify, "Lacanian psychoanalysis is not, in and of itself, a discourse of power. [...]. Lacan's 'four discourses' seek to account for the structural differences among discourses" (*The Lacanian Subject* 129). The same speaking and thinking subject may *traverse* (again I am using Fink's term here) among these four discourses and adopt one of them in compliance with the occasion and with his or her need at the moment. Fink further clarifies *and* emphasizes (to avoid any misunderstanding of the Lacanian discourses, particularly of their naming):

[L]et me point out that, while Lacan terms one of his discourses the "hysteric's discourse," he does not mean thereby that a given hysteric always and inescapably adopts or functions within the hysteric's discourse. As an analyst, the hysteric may function within the analyst's discourse; as an academic, the hysteric may function within the discourse of the university. The hysteric's psychical structure does not change as he or she changes discourses, but his or her efficacy changes. Situating him or herself within the analyst's discourse, his or her effect on others corresponds to the effect allowed by that discourse and suffers from the obstacles and shortcomings endemic to that discourse. A particular discourse facilitates

⁷⁹ Fink points out, "[t]he thing that is immediately striking is that, while Lacan forges a discourse of the hysteric, there is no such discourse of the obsessive neurotic, phobic, pervert, or psychotic. Their discourses can no doubt be formalized to some extent, and Lacan went a long way towards formalizing the structure of fantasy in phobia, perversion, and so on. Yet they are not primary focuses of the four major discourses he outlines" (*The Lacanian Subject* 130).

⁸⁰ I use the locution "o/Other" to refer to the imaginary other or the symbolic Other in Lacanian theory. This will become a significant conceptual, besides locutional, difference in my later theorization of plot.

certain things and hinders others, allows one to see certain things while blinding one to others. (Ibid. 129-30)

It should then be stressed that one does not turn into a hysteric just because s/he adopts and functions within the Hysteric's discourse. (A clinical hysteric has to possess and demonstrate the clinical structure of the hysteric to be termed as such.) Neither does one become an analyst when functioning within the Analyst's discourse. The discourses do not determine and equate our (psychical) structures, positions, and, in a word, *being*, whereas the way we *are* may influence or determine the discourse we adopt and choose to function in. Rather, Lacan's four discourses reveal and configure four major types of discursive structures/structurations wherein we employ—or even inhabit—language to communicate and interact with others *and* to understand ourselves (say, our positions and self-positionings in relation to the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real). For instance, the discourses of the Master and the University tend to direct us more toward the symbolic and toward further symbolization by the instrumentality of language, if not along with the acquisition of knowledge, while the discourses of the Hysteric and the Analyst may bring us closer to the real—to what we desire at heart and wish (or attempt) to name or return to. This takes us to one of Lacan's claims that there is no such thing as metalanguage.⁸¹ I am now concluding this section with one last passage by Fink, who continues to shed light upon Lacan's own teaching (here of discourse and the human subject on the whole):

[O]ne is always operating within a particular discourse, even as one talks about discourse in general terms. Psychoanalysis' claim to fame does not reside in providing an Archimedean point *outside of discourse*, but simply in elucidating the

⁸¹ See the Lacanian epigrams heading Fink's chapter "The Four Discourses" (*The Lacanian Subject* 129).

structure of discourse itself. Every discourse requires a loss of *jouissance* and has its own mainspring or truth (often carefully dissimulated). Each discourse defines that loss differently, starting from a different mainspring. Marx elucidated certain features of capitalist discourse, and Lacan elucidates features of other discourses as well. It is not until we have identified the features peculiar to a discourse that we can know how it operates. (*The Lacanian Subject* 137)

At this point we can inquire into how Lacan's discourse theory and its four discourses operate in narratological terms, specifically the workings of plot.

[II]

A Theory of Plot Discourses and Orientations

Aristotle does not speak of *discourse* while giving primacy to plot in *Poetics*. Rather, he discourses about *diction* as that which belongs to "the art of performance" and stands on its own, distinctly apart from reasoning, which belongs to the realm of rhetoric.⁸² And when Bakhtin places *discourse* in the novel in the limelight, he is neither contemplating about nor interested in the relation between discourse and plot. Bakhtin is, as we know, concerned for large part with the interplay *between* texts, composed in language, *any* language, that carries internally stratifying forces and is, as he himself emphasizes, by no means ideologically free to begin with, *and* socio-cultural contexts that engender texts with their *translinguistic* dialogism (what Julia Kristeva calls *intertextuality*⁸³). Granted that Bakhtin sees a divide between monologic and dialogic

⁸² See *Poetics* 31-32, for instance.

⁸³ Kristeva spots the value of what she terms "intertextuality" in Bakhtin's formulation of translinguistic dialogism. In the article, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel" (first published in *Σημειωτική* in 1969), Kristeva discusses Bakhtin's contribution, in her usual linguist's parlance, of "introducing the *status of the word* as a minimal structural unit": "[t]o investigate the status of the word is to study its articulations (as semic complex) with other words in the sentence, and then to look for the same functions or relationships at the articulatory level of larger sequences" [Italics original] (*Desire in Language* 65). Kristeva further points out the seed of intertextuality in "the word": "[t]he word as minimal textual unit thus turns out to occupy the status of *mediator*,

discourses in the epic and the novel and therewith undertakes a useful discussion of language and discourse along the lines of literary genres, my questions then arise: can there be any such meaningful relation that goes beyond generic boundaries and into the general workings of narrative on the whole; a possible relation that exists in the particular case between discourse and plot? If there can be any sensible relation at all, (that is, if I can pull off a relation as such), how does or will this relation work?

In some significant way, Bakhtin has answered part of the first question I raised here. Language—language is the key. Bakhtin begins the essay “The Problem of Speech Genres” (published posthumously in 1979) with his usual emphasis and pronouncement on language: “[a]ll the diverse areas of human activity involve the use of language” (Duff 83). He argues shortly after that both literary genres and speech genres⁸⁴ share “a common *verbal* (language) nature” [Italics original] (Ibid. 84). This *verbal* nature is that which cuts across genres of human utterances, oral and written. Bakhtin then sets out to define what he calls *primary (simple)* and *secondary (complex)* speech genres: while *primary (simple)* speech genres “[take] form in unmediated speech communication,” the

linking structural models to cultural (historical) environment, as well as that of *regulator*, controlling mutations from diachrony to synchrony, i.e., to literary structure. The word is spatialized” [Italics original] (Ibid. 66). This article sees Kristeva’s own attempt at engaging Bakhtin’s terms in thinking about narrative operations yet meanwhile without committing herself to narratological vocabulary and studies. For Kristeva’s detailed elaboration of Bakhtin’s dialogism and her own concept of intertextuality, see the reprinted article “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” compiled in *Desire in Language* (1980), edited by Leon S. Roudiez.

⁸⁴ I think it is best to quote Bakhtin’s own articulated definition of *speech genres* from the opening paragraph of his essay: “Language is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity. These utterances reflect the specific conditions and goals of each such area not only through their content (thematic) and linguistic style, that is, the selection of the lexical, phraseological, and grammatical resources of the language, but above all through their compositional structure. All three of these aspects—thematic content, style, and compositional structure—are inseparably linked to the *whole* of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call *speech genres*” [Italics original] (Duff 83). The problem of *speech genres*, as Bakhtin perceives it, lies in the common belief that genres as such are “boundless”—too “heterogeneous” to be systematically studied. The objective of Bakhtin’s essay is precisely to address this problem and demonstrate that speech genres *can* be studied and analyzed.

secondary and more complex ones “absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres” and, in doing so, “lose their immediate relation to actual reality and to the real utterances of others” (Ibid. 85). According to Bakhtin, “novels, dramas, all kinds of scientific research, major genres of commentary, and so forth” belong to the latter group. Bakhtin’s insight into the verbal nature of literary and speech genres is, I think, most interestingly pertinent to my own narratological theorization about the verbal function of narrative with plot as its *verbalizing* agent. Narrativity of any literary genre (and across all such genres) can thence be said to most likely optimize this verbal nature of human activity.

Perhaps, after all, it is not impossible to perceive discourse and narrative plot as being delicately threaded together: if what Bakhtin sees in the discourse in the novel can be boiled down to the *verb* in the novel, then the same metaphor can be found in plot and plotting apropos of narrative and narrativity on the whole. Both discourse and plot contain verbal functions within them—that is, they are the motoring forces in narrative; they are that which keeps narrative *alive, happening, and developing*.⁸⁵ Seeing that they share more in common on this ground than differ from each other, I am proposing a theory of plot discourse that goes against the grain in the tradition of narratological studies. This tradition has seen the divorce of discourse and plot into their separate ways as two distinctly disparate elements (or axes) of narrative (see my introductory chapter). Seymour Chatman famously articulates this divergence for us: while “the story is the *what* in a narrative that is depicted, discourse the *how*” (19). In the narratological tradition, (not to mention outside this field), plot has been reduced to the *what* (i.e., a string of sequentially meaningful events and actions), while discourse has been confined

⁸⁵ We know from Bakhtin that this is one of the underlying differences between the epic and the novel—namely, (dialogic) discourse in the novel is the agent that functions to keep the novel ever-present and ever-animated (as opposed to being ossified) for us and for itself as a genre.

to and studied as *styles* of speech (e.g., direct and indirect speeches) or *styles* of narration. Thus, on the one hand, we have Peter Brooks' study of plot, irrespective of discourse, and, on the other hand, Dorrit Cohn's model of discourse (as one example) irrespective of plot. While projects like these are and will continue to remain meaningful to narrative studies, I would like to attempt at reconfiguring the relation between discourse and plot and introduce a different way of thinking and discussing about such a relation.

What I propose here is a conjunction, or suturing, of discourse and plot, *particularly with the term "discourse" being understood here in Bakhtinian and Lacanian terms.* (This is why, to avoid confusion, I speak of a theory of *plot discourse*, and not *narrative discourse* as narratologists understand the term.) It is a model about "the verb" in plot on the basis of another verbal system—a model of plot discourse constructed on Lacan's four discourses, or, to be more exact, that of four basic discursive structures in narrative. Later I will explain how a theory of plot discourse gives rise to a model of plot orientation, for I wish to argue that plot orientations are determined and directed by plot discourses. As E. M. Forster pinpoints, a plot is "a narrative of events, the emphasis falling on causality" (as opposed to his definition of a story, which is "a narrative of events arranged in their time-sequence") (86). Lacan's four discourses address this emphasis on causality: desire is at the core of these four discursive configurations. One's desire is caused and sustained by an *objet petit a* which retains part of the Other and reminds, even reconfigures, one's relation to that Other; the *objet petit a* operates both as a rem(a)inder of the (desired) Other and hence as a cause of one's desire. Now, the Lacanian discourse theory concerns, *au fond*, one's relation to the Other, caused by one's position *vis-à-vis* this Other via his relation to this rem(a)inder (*objet petit a*). This is why Lacan's discourse theory is in essence that of one's relation to oneself and the world,

together with one's position and role functioning in, caused by, and effecting on that world. It is a world in which *causality* is never lacking and is fundamentally at the root of human relations and communication. To understand the workings of plot in terms of Lacan's discourse theory would nourish our understanding of plot and narrative in the face of this emphasis on causality as well as a suturing of the *what*, the *how*, and the *why*: namely, *what* is the relationship, particularly that which concerns desire as plot motivation and narrative's *raison d'être*, between one actant (Greimas' term) and another in a given plot that is oriented by a given Lacanian discursive structure, *how* that relationship works, and *why* it works the way it does in that given discursive constellation.

Plot discourses give rise to and shape plot orientations in narratives. I would like to propose that, *generally speaking*, each plot in a given narrative is likely *either* to engage and, in turn, be dominated and oriented by one of the four Lacanian discourses *or* to play out two or more of them. Seen in this light hand in hand with Bakhtinian terms, plot in the former case tends to operate with *centripetal* forces and would thus appear *monologic*, while plot in the latter case tends to operate with *centrifugal* dynamism (even violence) and would appear *dialogic*. Accordingly, the plot that engages solely the discourse of the Master and/or the discourse of the University would orient the narrative toward *the symbolic*, along with it, the symbolization (or, the other side of the coin, castration⁸⁶) of the (narrative and, by extension, human) subject. Plot as such tends to orient its narrative toward the *unification and centralization* of the symbolic order and the subject's position (and function) therein. This plot discourse and orientation can include those narratives that aim at (socio-cultural or political) dominance and

⁸⁶ The two sides of symbolization (or the symbolic order's symbolizing power and demand) will be more discussed in Chapter 4 in tandem with narrative endings and end-jouissances.

subjection. Nationalistic and colonial texts feature such narratives that orient toward the consolidation or centralization of the symbolic order of a given nation or culture. Traditional children's literature and such Victorian children's texts as Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863) also predicate on the discourses of the Master and/or the University (e.g., the religious discourse) for the purpose of educating the young on socio-moral mores and facilitating their symbolic subject formation. It is hence of first and foremost importance that such plots orient the narratives and meanwhile their reading subjects toward the symbolic.

On the other hand, the plot that engages the discourse of the Hysteric (*with the traversing of fantasy*) and/or the discourse of the Analyst (particularly the latter discourse) could orient the narrative toward *the real* and would, ideally speaking, orient the (fictive, reading, and/or writing) subject toward the obtainment or appropriation of the jouissance of the real, or the discovery of his or her own master signifier (rather than the master signifier in the Master's discourse or that supported by the discourse of the University). Plot as such tends to orient its narrative toward *disunity and decentralization*, or, *gaps and holes*, so to speak, and, in doing so, facilitates the (fictive, reading, and/or writing) subject to gain self-knowledge and his/her own truth, rather than those of the Other. Nevertheless, if a plot engages the discourse of the Hysteric *without the traversing of fantasy*, then plot as such could orient toward the real, the imaginary, or the symbolic, depending on the dimension in which the desired other/Other or objet petit a lies, or the psychical plane upon which the subject fixates his/her fantasy. Only, at the end of such narratives, neither new knowledge or truth could be yielded, nor could the subject functioning within the Hysteric discourse reconfigure his/her desire and fantasy. Plot thus directed would usually close in a psychical dead-end. Last but not least, if a plot engages a dialectic between the discourse

of the Master (or that of the University) and the discourse of the Hysteric (or that of the Analyst), then it is the emplotment of narrative ending that decides or showcases the prevailing party, i.e., the “triumphant” discourse and plot orientation as such.

In brief, the purpose of my theorization about plot orientations is to further along the narratological inquiry into the intentions of narratives and designs of emplotment. Narrative plots that are oriented toward the symbolic manifest a desire, individual or collective, for the symbolization and institutionalization of the human subject (as well as the centralization, unification, or consolidation of the symbolic order). *In human relational terms* (one’s relation to others), *symbolic* plot orientations concern the subject’s relationship with, or self-positioning vis-à-vis, the symbolic Other, whereas *imaginary* plot orientations deal primarily with one’s relation to the imaginary other (imago, mirror image, or specular other). And those narrative plots that orient toward *the real* desire a return of or to the *real* state of being (oneness that ex-ists the symbolic order and knows no lack). This is, in sum, a small model of plot typology on the psychical level.

Let us not forget that, while one plot may orient toward the symbolic and symbolization of the subject (as well as symbolized enjoyment) and another toward the real and the experience of the real jouissance, *plots and narratives in general are quintessentially and ultimately concerned with human desire, apropos of an ontological lack, symbolized by chains of signifiers. This is the inherent and immanent truth about plot, plotting, narrative and narrativity on (the basis of) the (w)hole.* Indeed, given my theoretical orientation, I would like to argue, as I have in the earlier chapters, that narrative plots in the main are organized around the hole in our human existence and condition. The lack in us as human subjects causes our desire for narrative and narrativity. Plot orientations, in this sense, are not only concerned with how the

narrative middle works, but, more importantly, how the narrative middle *works out* the anxious (because delimited) human desire for freedom to desire (the other/Other, knowledge, truth, non-lack, etc.). Lastly, I would like to point out here that plots in the narrative middle on the (w)hole are constituted and oriented by the four primes in the Lacanian discourse theory: \$ (the barred or split subject), *a* (objet petit *a*; the cause of desire; or, the rem[a]inder of the Other), S1 (the master signifier or, in a word, truth), and S2 (other signifiers that constitute or produce knowledge). In other words, it is my hope that a model of plot orientations, together with plot discourses, would help address the enigmatic question of human desire (indeed the crux of narrative and narrativity) in relation to the other/Other, to knowledge, to truth, and, ultimately, to one's self.

[III]

Narcissus without the Traversing of Fantasy

I begin with one of Ovid's embedded narratives in *Metamorphoses*. I take the liberty here of treating the embedded story about Narcissus (a part of Ovid's long epic poem in fifteen books) as one independent narrative for the purpose of my present discussion of plot discourse and orientation. The verse narrative of Narcissus proves invaluable revealing in terms of the nature of narrative and the workings of plot: it serves as my literary exemplar of human desire, the undergirding truth of narrative and the motoring force of plot.

Narcissus's story tells us a lot more than a mythic youth of "yielding beauty"⁸⁷ who is too proud to love anyone else but himself, so in the end dies out of this outrageous pride and accursed self-love. His story is, in truth, *everyman's* story. Narcissus symbolizes the plight of the human subject trapped in his or her mirror stage. He falls in love with

⁸⁷ *Metamorphoses* (Book III; Ln 455), 104.

his own mirror image and thereby yearns for a return to unity and wholeness (namely, no split from and in himself). In the Aristotelian sense, his story is perfectly tragic—a plot that contains both *recognition* and *reversal*: Narcissus undergoes a painful reversal of his state of being; he transforms from what Lacan calls the position of the *eromenos* (the *beloved*) to that of the *erastes* (the *lover*). He loves, rather than being loved and pursued by others, male and female (such as the famous Echo with her unrequited love). He recognizes something deeper and weightier than that which Aristotle lays down for us as actions of recognition. Narcissus recognizes the one fundamental human truth: he, like every other human subject, is irrevocably and hence tragically *split*: “But *now* I get it! *I am that other one!*/ I’ve finally seen through my own image!/ I burn with love for—*me!*” [Italics original] (109; lines 599-601). It is apparent that, in the face of split as such, Narcissus desires all the more the freedom to desire (a unified self). At one point of immense frustration and pain, Narcissus cries out, “Oh, would that I were able to secede/ from my own body, depart from what I love!” (109; lines 607-608). Yet, freedom cannot be found since Narcissus remains incapable of going through and enduring complete separation from a unified whole (of self). He may have genuinely wished for a split from this wholeness but remains throughout the end unable to truly accept the cut in his being.

The plot of Narcissus’s verse narrative is driven forward by the hero’s all-too-human desire, and this desire is driven forward by the mirror image as *objet petit a*, a recall of the real which entails non-differentiation between self and other. Narcissus’s plot is that which engages the discourse of the Hysteric, and what his discourse produces is self-knowledge. Narcissus comes to know himself, in contradistinction to Tiresias’s prophecy which tells that Narcissus “would live to ripe old age,/ ‘If he knows himself—not’ ” (104; lines 447, 449). This Socratic truth of knowing oneself is recognition of lack

in Narcissus's being. Narcissus's plot remains driven by the Hysteric's discourse *without the traversing of fantasy*: having recognized his objet petit a as an imaginary other, Narcissus continues to stay by the pool, utterly incapable of reconfiguring his fantasy, i.e., his relation to a mirror image. Instead of desiring a symbolic Other upon his poignant recognition and thereby getting out of his traumatic fixation on (the wholeness of) self, Narcissus goes on pining for an imaginary relation with his very self. His mirror image continues to preside as objet petit a, the cause of his desire, despite the fact that a lack of separation between him and his mirror image also causes anxiety. As a result, Narcissus's plot dies out of anxiety as such. Where there is no lack of lacking (that is, no lack of absence and separation), there is no narrative life. Narcissus's desperate clinging to the idea of an imaginary whole and his inability to enter and anchor in the symbolic tell the end of his story, his (p)lot. Driven thus by the discourse of the Hysteric toward the impossible (for the hysteric desires the impossible), the narrative of Narcissus exemplifies a plot that orients toward *the imaginary*. (Not to mention that Narcissus is literally transformed from a human subject into an *image*; he is metamorphosed into "a flower, whose white petals fit/ closely around a saffron-colored center" (110-11; lines 657-58) and exists, or can only exist, in the symbolic order and signifying chain as a signifier, devoid of his human substance.) True, Narcissus's lot is reversed (from the *eromenos* to the *erastes*), but his plot does not traverse beyond the imaginary to the symbolic. When one operates both as the loved and as lover at the same time, one engages in the *imaginary* realm where self and other are desired as one. Narcissus's fate, together with his plot, thus remains singular in the world of *Metamorphoses*.

[IV]

A Divine Comedy of the Symbolic Jouissance

Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* bespeaks the apogee of symbolic jouissance, or, jouissance symbolized by and experienced in the symbolic order of human existence. Granted, this verse masterpiece in thirty-three cantos records Dante the hero's spiritual journey upward toward God's immanent presence imbued with grace and love. The hero must first go through the Inferno and recognize sin of its multifarious kinds, then ascend through the Purgatorio and be purged of the dross of his being, and finally enter the realm of the Paradiso and obtain a blissful glimpse of the Holy Spirit and its ever-glowing truth. This much we have known and learned from a close reading of the text itself and from commentaries on the *Divine Comedy*. What else can we say about the legacy of this masterpiece, if not also a *symbolic master narrative* in Western literature?

To argue whether the *Divine Comedy* structurally leans more toward the epic or the novel and judge its literary merit accordingly (as Lukács did) is not my purpose here. Epic or novelistic, this encyclopedic poem composed in terza rima is very much of a narrative, though not in form, in its nature. Neither do I here intend to *novelize* this work, rich in its verse, although, in Bakhtin's view, the *Divine Comedy* does carry novelistic traits, particularly in view of its temporal logic. Seeing that it is narrative at heart, I take the liberty to examine its plot discourses and orientation.

Like narratives in general, Dante's visionary poem is driven forward, and, in its case, upward by desire—"[t]he object is to achieve God," as Dante's translator John Cicardi pinpoints (xii). Dante the hero desires knowledge of and ultimate unification with God, and it is this desire for the symbolized F(O)ther (God the Father as Other) in the Christian tradition that sustains the narrative of the *Divine Comedy* and motors the

energetics of its plot. The poem, with its triadic topology, is threaded and unified by the discourse of the University. (Let us recall that the discourse of the University is not necessarily that of the university, or *any* university, as an educational institution; it is in large part the discourse of any school of thought or line of tradition symbolized as the authoritative locus of knowledge and truth.) The Medieval religious faith in and epistemological pursuit of God and God's plan are that which comprise the discourse of the University in Dante's work. Dante scholar Archibald T. MacAllister asks us to "remember that Dante lived in a Catholic world or, rather, universe, in which every slightest thing was encompassed in the will and knowledge of an omnipotent and omniscient Deity and that the supreme attribute of that Deity was the mystery of His Trinity and Unity" (*Divine Comedy* 13). David Thompson also affirms that "Dante is God's scribe; his poem embodies a distinctively scriptural mode of figure or allegory" (Thompson 2). By arguing that the plot of the *Divine Comedy* is oriented by the discourse of the University, I do not at all mean to further orthodoxize or theologize Dante's work, as Harold Bloom cautions in *The Western Canon* (1994).⁸⁸ There is no question here about the originality of Dante's creation. But let us not forget that, while creating a unique and individualized vision of a religious experience as Bloom contends, the poet, however subversive, still operates within a theological framework, albeit an Augustinian one. It is precisely on the grounds that, in line with Christian thinking, knowledge and truth are located outside the subject him- or herself and instead placed in God as the symbolic (F)Other that we can argue for the dominance of the University's discourse in Dante's narrative.

In Lacanian terms, this God of the pre-Enlightenment Age is the Master functioning

⁸⁸ For more details concerning Bloom's defense of Dante and the *Divine Comedy* against past and present theologizing attempts by Dante scholars and other intellectual figures, see his chapter "The Strangeness of Dante: Ulysses and Beatrice" (*The Western Canon* 72-98).

as *the truth* supported in/by the discourse of the University. The *Divine Comedy* epitomizes the relation between the discourse of the University and that of the Master, namely the former supports, affirms, and continues the logic of the latter. The end of the hero's spiritual journey is to enter and get firmly anchored within the University's discourse which upholds God as Master, or, *the* being of unsplit (hence inhuman) wholeness and omnipotent authority. Let us remember that Dante's plot kicks off when the hero finds himself at the point of wandering off from God's path; there is something *lacking* midway in his religious life; there is a *separation* between him and God as the (F)Other: "Midway in our life's journey, I went astray/ from the straight road and woke to find myself/ alone in a dark wood" (16; "Canto I," lines 1-3). From this point onwards, the hero's plot yearns for and orients toward a return to the F(O)ther, to be, once again, one with the (F)Other.⁸⁹ Throughout his journey, uphill and downhill, God as Master is never questioned, not by the Miltonic Lucifer to say to least. Dante's fallen angel, satanized, is confined to the bottomest pit of the Inferno as one of those who in their lifetime have been "treacherous to their masters" (264). With "his legs projecting high into the air" (267; "Canto XXXIV," line 90), Dante's Satan is here deprived of any discourse or speech, subversive or not. God remains unchallenged and whole. With "comedy" being understood here as a totalized and totalizing version—and vision—of existence, the *Divine Comedy* is in this sense not only the hero-pilgrim's comedy but also, and literally, the divine comedy, the comedy of *le Non/Nom du Père*, the comedy of God as the Master of wholeness.

Virgil and Beatrice both belong to this discourse of the University in service of God as

⁸⁹ My expression "F(O)ther" refers to God the Father, with the secondary meaning of Other implied and embedded within this term. The expression "(F)Other" refers first to Other, with (this time) God the Father as the implied connotation. In Lacanian theory, the Other does not always or necessarily refer to God, but, in the context of Dante's work, God is both the Father and the Other that Dante the hero desires to reach and return to.

Master. While being generally perceived as a guide on the hero's spiritual quest, Virgil functions, more significantly, as a *master* who has mastered and now incarnates the University's discourse, and he is virtually addressed as such by the hero throughout their journeys in the Inferno and the Purgatorio. He is present to instruct and illumine the will and truth of the Master on the one hand and on the other to mold and consolidate the hero's acquired knowledge of God and His universe. It is obvious that Virgil does not function in the Analyst's discourse in which he would have dialectized the hero's position as a split subject in the symbolic, which, of course, is never Dante the poet's intent or interest. Rather, the beloved mentor functions as, in A.-J. Greimas's term, the Helper, and an indispensable one, of the symbolic order in Dante's (p)lot. He is present to fortify the hero's desire of the desire of the F(O)ther. He attends to the hero's obtainment of wholeness as the latter embraces the whole of God, and the whole of God is perfectly manifested by the Ptolemaic universe comprised of nine concentric spheres, as Cicardi remarks (xv). Indeed, the discourse of the University as such orients both the poem and the hero toward unity and centralization. Its plot, predominated by the University's discourse, orients toward *the symbolic and reinforced symbolization of the human subject*.

Like Virgil, Beatrice functions as the Helper (Greimas' actantial term) of the symbolic and is classically understood (and interpreted) as Divine Love. This interpretive grid that reads Beatrice's symbolic presence/function as Divine Love, distinct from Virgil's as Reason, does not exclude her from functioning within the University's discourse, considering it is the whole of the Catholic theology (even when it is of Dante's own original version/vision), with the notion of Divine Love being one quintessential part of it, that comprises discourse as such in the *Divine Comedy*. In truth, Beatrice is present in the poem to complete not only the hero's experience of God but also the discourse of

the University itself. Her heavenly beauty, finally unveiled, is more than a matter of a pure aesthetic experience; it aims to “instruct your mortal sight,” as the lady’s handmaids address to the hero by the river Lethe (558; “Canto XXXI,” line 111). She who emanates grace is Divine Love and may at the same time symbolize for Dante scholars and Dante’s readers many other Christian virtues and values. Charles Williams, for instance, likens Beatrice to the lady in the tradition of courtly love at one point and at another “Mary at the cross” (22, 193), while Charles S. Singleton names the attainment to her as attainment to human happiness (116). Whatever she symbolizes, Beatrice functions as a signifier in the signifying chain of the University’s discourse. As Divine Love, she is part and parcel of God as the desired (F)Other. Yet stripped of all her theological symbolization, Beatrice is, I argue, the *objet petit a* in the poem.

Harold Bloom is quite right in sensing that the figure of Beatrice is not so much “a type of Christ” as “the ideal object of Dante’s sublimated desire” (*The Western Canon* 77). Bloom is also right in remarking that “[w]hen she enters *Purgatorio* she speaks to her poet neither as a lover nor as a mother, but as a deity speaks to a mortal, albeit a mortal with whom she has a very special relationship” (Ibid. 90). Nevertheless, this “special relationship” existing uncannily (as Bloom points out) between Dante the hero and Beatrice is *not* the relationship between the former as lover and the latter as the object of a man’s love or desire. We can safely say that Shakespeare’s Ophelia functions as a first loved, later denied, and overall misplaced object of Hamlet’s desire (if not hate as well), but Dante’s Beatrice is an *objet petit a*, the *cause* of the hero’s desire as well as the way of getting (back) to the (F)Other. *She exists not as a love object that receives love of another, but as pure desirousness that causes the hero to continue desiring.* In simpler terms, Dante the hero desires God through desiring Beatrice: he desires the vision of God through first desiring a vision of her for whom his heart and soul yearns; he desires the

freedom (from doubts) to desire God, again, through first desiring the freedom (from shame) to desire Beatrice. He desires her not only because she is the pure and the virtuous but, more significantly, because she, both in the minds of the poet and the hero, is a manifesting part of the big Other. Through her as objet petit a, a return to this big Other becomes conceivably possible and attainable. It is, therefore, Beatrice who leads the hero towards a symbolic jouissance with God in the end, a jouissance of a completed and unified religious experience (and vision). Primal jouissance of the real is here joyfully transposed to a reinstated jouissance of the symbolic. Unlike Ovid's Narcissus, Dante the hero is able to desire, and he does keenly desire, an objet petit a of the symbolic order (namely, a reminder of the symbolic Other). His metamorphosis thus merits a far happier (p)lot than he who is forever trapped within the imaginary.

The *Divine Comedy* has shone through the ages and continued to wield a fascinatingly strong hold on those who live or lived in a Nietzschean universe where God is dead and in all the subsequent "chaotic" epochs (to quote Bloom's phrase). The poem remains unique and exemplary (though by no means entirely) by virtue of its affirming plot discourses and "happy" (or hopeful) orientation (despite the gloomy Hell and the dizzying Purgatory with their respective admonishments and warnings): it orients toward an inner consolidation of the human subject and, more significantly, toward a comedy of God as whole, as the Master signifier that does not simply exist but exists to be desired (and thereby sustains the human subject as the desiring subject). In this particular vision, one is able to secure anchorage in and reunion with the (F)Other and hopes for symbolic unity while living in the midst of political strife as Dante did in the city-state of Florence of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

[V]

King Lear and King *Real*

A. C. Bradley aptly asked at the beginning of the twentieth century, “[f]or Dante that which is recorded in the *Divine Comedy* was the justice and love of God. What then is recorded in *King Lear* for Shakespeare the great bard? Something, it would seem, very different” (22). Indeed, if Dante’s *Divine Comedy* epitomizes a comic vision of the human subject totalized and totalizable in the symbolic order, Shakespeare’s *King Lear* presents a polar opposite of this vision. Reputedly the darkest of Shakespearean tragedies, *King Lear*’s “dark powers” have lingered on centuries after its first performance at the Elizabethan court in the December of 1606. The play has been understood by its spectators, readers, and commentators to be more than a tragic play about a humbled king and father who, by dint of humiliation and contrition, finally comes to recognize friends from foes, the true and virtuous from the false and ungrateful. The aging king’s learned lessons—among all, love and power—have been universally discussed by scholars, Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean alike. His fate, accompanied by Cordelia’s death, still grips our literary sensibility to this very day. If posed in the other way around, Bradley’s question then becomes: what does Shakespeare’s *King Lear* record for us?

This question, a great mystery per se, has continued to haunt us into the 21st century. What is it about the tragedy of *King Lear* that has kept a time-resistant and emotionally unshakable hold on us, besides its much commented-upon poetic “injustice” (as exemplified by Cordelia’s death) and the fearful and pitiful reversal of the king’s own fate in the Aristotelian sense? Is it a tragedy about the death of God, or gods, along with the notion of and hope for providential justice, which results in “a malign or at least indifferent universe in which human life is meaningless and brutal” (Bevington, ed., 1167)? Is it a self-induced tragedy about “a fault of the mind” with its “foolish

misjudgment” of a “selfish, self-centred” character exemplified by Lear, as G. Wilson Knight puts forth (Adelman, ed., 36)? Or, is it a tragedy about love—the “avoidance of love” as Stanley Cavell suggests⁹⁰; more, a father’s repressed desire of his daughter, as Harold Bloom accuses Freud of “misreading” (as if Freud did make such a statement *because* the Freud of psychoanalysis who had notoriously “misread” Sophocles’ play could not have read those of Shakespeare otherwise)?⁹¹ Or, as Janet Adelman interprets, the patriarchal love-hate of “the overwhelming mother within,” who is too dangerous to be openly embraced and easily contained, and whose return is impossible to be preempted, at least not without some sort of reconfiguration of the male fantasy?⁹²

Indeed, given the depth and breadth of the richness and complexities of Shakespearean plays on the whole, *King Lear*, for one, continually escapes any readerly effort, past and present, to secure loci of meaning, when the play itself exemplifies a text of aporia. It is, of course, precisely this Shakespearean dialogic imagination that constitutes part of the everlasting charms of the bard’s works.⁹³ For my own

⁹⁰ Stanley Cavell suggests that “what Lear is ashamed of is not his need for love and his inability to return it, but of the *nature* of his love for Cordelia. It is too far from plain love of father for daughter. Even if we resist seeing in it the love of lovers, it is at least incompatible with the idea of her having any (other) lover.” See the entire chapter of “The Avoidance of Love” collected by Janet Adelman in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear* (1978).

⁹¹ For more of Bloom’s critique of what he believes to have been Freud’s “misreading” of Shakespeare, see chapters “Shakespeare, Center of the Canon” and “Freud: A Shakespearean Reading” in *The Western Canon* (1994) and his chapter on *King Lear* in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (1998).

⁹² Janet Adelman notices an all-too-blatant absence of maternal figures in this particular play of Shakespeare. Nonetheless, she observes that the male characters in the play do not fail to react to and center their emotional responses upon the threatening female presence behind the scenes. She argues, for instance, “[w]hen Cordelia insists that she cannot love her father all, she creates a rage in Lear that we might agree to call oedipal, and to gender male, insofar as it seems to have its roots in the son’s frustrated desire for the mother’s exclusive sexual attention” (125). She then postulates a different reading of the (psychic) functions of the three daughters, good and evil: “at this point, maternal presence splits in two, as the benign and nurturant mother with whom Lear would merge generates her opposite, the annihilating mothers who seek his death” (117). According to Adelman, reconfiguration of Lear’s fantasy as such enables the old patriarch to finally embrace Cordelia as the benign maternal figure, especially when the heroine is *choked* to death, “her potentially troublesome voice silenced in her throat.” For complete discussion, see Adelman’s chapter “Suffocating Mothers in *King Lear*” (*Suffocating Mothers* 103-29).

⁹³ I do not wish to engage in any debate here concerning Shakespeare’s authorial identity and authorship.

interpretation of the play in terms of its plot discourses and plot orientation, I would not go so far as to second Harold Bloom's innovative suggestion that the tragedy of *King Lear* is, to a large extent, that of Edgar, more so than it is Lear's.⁹⁴ With Lear (not Edgar, or Edmund, Gloucester, or even Cordelia) being the center, the play orients toward *the real* upon deconstructing *the symbolic*. I would like to bring out an interpretative possibility in which the tragic core of the play lies in the brutal truth unveiled in Lear's discourse of the Master—the hard-taken truth of the master being not whole, in tandem with the disheartening truth of every human subject functioning in the symbolic order, Lear as king included, as irrevocably split and irretrievably separated from the Other.

Given that not all commentators of the play take much into account the fact that Lear is not only a father but, significantly, a king to boot, critics such as William R. Elton, Harold Bloom, and Paul W. Kahn are right in their timely reminders of Lear's political, even God-entrusted, sovereignty. However the king undergoes a crisis of faith in his relation to the gods later in the play as Elton analyzes, Lear first appears on the scene, "convinced of his dependence on the higher powers, who support him and from whom he derives his being and his end" (Elton 172). It is thus clear that Lear functions in the discourse of the Master right at the outset of the play. That he functions as master in the Master's discourse signifies not only what he himself believes in, but, more importantly, that the master, like every other human subject, is no exception to desire the desire of the others, i.e., Lear being "master" and "[a]uthority" as in the most loyal yet feudalistic mind of Kent (1.4.27-30). Lear whole-heartedly partakes in the Master's discourse, which has understandably given occasion to scholarly critique of the old king's "abuse" of the powers inherent in his position as well as resulting debates over the ethical character

⁹⁴ Regarding this argument of his, Bloom writes that "Edgar is the center, and we can wonder why we are so slow to see that it is, except for Lear, Edgar's play after all" (*Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 482-84).

of his “lordship.” However good or bad he is as king, Lear’s “fault,” in part, lies in that he functions too earnestly as master in the Master’s discourse, and his over-zealousness cannot be solely accounted for matter-of-factly by his having been born or crowned king. In Lear’s mind, operating as master is that which is desired of him by the others in the symbolic order of his world/kingdom and is therefore of utmost importance not only to himself but also to the maintenance of this order. He is their *master signifier*, and he has to do everything in his power to uphold this signifying (or semiotic) function of his, including hosting a trial scene at the outset of the play wherein Lear as master stages that which is desired of him—a master of his court, upheld and desired. Since, according to Lacan, the symbolic order is defined and empowered by language, Lear being the *master signifier* exacts love to be professed in language and thereby demands an onrush and display of signifiers, however emptied of their corresponding signifieds, to feed and support the signifying chain of which he is head and master.

Lear’s (p)lot is more complicated than that of a dethroned, betrayed, and usurped master. The complexity of Lear’s character, together with his (p)lot, does not merely reside in his role and function as master. Lear as master and king differs, for instance, from Sophocles’s Creon holding more or less the same position: while Creon, even in the name of the public good, commands “Obey!” from his political subjects (Antigone included), Lear demands more than political and patriarchal identification and fealty. Indeed, Lear is the one character in the play who functions both in the Master’s and the Hysteric’s discourses. I would go even further by arguing that Lear masks his Hysteric’s discourse with that of the Master; the latter empowers the former, so to speak. In truth, the king does not so much command loyalties from his subjects, which, whether by flattery or sincerity, are granted him (at least at the very beginning of the play). He desires love, and his insistence on being loved has not escaped the attention of spectators, readers, and commentators alike. Nevertheless, *first and foremost functioning in the*

Hysteric's discourse, Lear desires more than love, or being loved as a love object (as most critics construe), for, if he does, he would have been satisfied with Cordelia's (in)famous reply that she *does* love him as daughter loves father, "no more nor less" (1.1.93). The fact that Lear commands that which is more than a daughterly love by no means makes him an incestuous father (and I, too, would disagree with any such reading). At the bottom of the truth, Lear desires to be *the objet petit a* of those around him—*the cause* of their desire. He believes that being king and (patriarchal) master is *the way* of being their objet petit a. His repeated grievance against being reduced of his knights, for instance, (a fact rarely commented on by scholars), turns out to be not so much a grievance against the diminution of his kingly power as that against the deprivation of his functioning as *the cause* of the desire of his royal-loyal subjects. Hence, back to the opening trial scene, Lear does not command so much "Obey!" as "Desire!" ("*Desirer!*")—*desire me as the cause of your desire and this is my command!*

Lear's opening gesture (a grand one indeed) of splitting his kingdom in whatever name, particularly with its consequences considered, has invited extensive commentaries and critiques, including even those of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. In his essay "The Theme of the Three Caskets" (1913), Freud remarks (among many things): "[T]o avoid misunderstandings, I should like to say that it is not my purpose to deny that King Lear's dramatic story is intended to inculcate two wise lessons: that one should not give up one's possessions and rights during one's lifetime, and that one must guard against flattery at its face value" (*The Freud Reader* 521). On the other hand, Lacan, like many a literary critic, observes that King Lear "gives up the service of goods, gives up his royal duties; the old fool believes he is lovable and, therefore, hands over the service of goods to his daughters. But you must not assume that he gives up anything" (*The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 305). True, Lear gives up nothing. It is certainly not his "darker

purpose” (1.1.36) to give up his king-/mastership. The gesture of breaking up the *body* of the kingdom and conferring the symbolized pieces upon “younger strengths” (1.1.40) rings Eucharistic: *here are portions of your king-dom. Take them for they are me. Desire them as you desire me. Let me be the cause of all that which you desire!* In this sense, I am here proposing the opposite of what Paul W. Kahn argues, “[p]rojecting the kingdom onto the map, Lear attempts to depoliticize his own body. No longer the mystical political body of a unitary king but the singular body of a beloved father is to hold together the divided kingdom” (*Law and Love: The Trials of King Lear* 4). I argue, rather, that Lear empowers and politicizes his Hysteric’s discourse with the discourse of the Master; he turns the desires of his daughter- and son-in-law-subjects into desires for the political state (and body) that symbolizes and is in turn symbolized by none other than him, King Lear. Hence, desiring to be *the cause*, Lear parcels out the state and turns its portions into surplus values which, he believes, bring out surplus *jouissance* for those who can identify with him as cause.

The plot of *King Lear*, in fact, commences with *two* splits, rather than one. Lear’s gesture of splitting the kingdom is, as we understand, ceremonial. He gives up nothing and desires, more than anything else, to remain whole with the Other. The gesture of dividing up the kingdom is Lear’s attempt at instituting himself as *the objet petit a* of the Other. However false and insincere, Goneril’s and Regan’s replies in the opening trial scene sustain Lear the master as whole, *the cause* of their desires. Hyperbolic phrases such as “more than,” “beyond,” and the superlative “most” in both of their discourses continue to support the master as un-delimit-able whole that is un-split-able by language. It is only in Cordelia, who makes clear that she is ready to function as a symbolic (i.e., split) subject, that Lear is confronted with the horrid fundamental truth of the human condition—namely, his irrevocable split and separation from the Other. He cannot be

and remain oneness with this Other who is herself, as any fully symbolized subject would be, split in terms of her consciousness and desire. Cordelia's behavior in the opening scene (like her death in the end) has never failed to evoke interpretations and critiques of many a diverse nature. In my view, it is not that Cordelia behaves as "a loving but stubbornly self-righteous daughter" (Adelman 119), but that this daughter, however reluctantly, is the one who honestly accepts her human condition and symbolic function, unlike her royal father. In this sense, Cordelia can be said to unwittingly function in the Analyst's discourse, who refuses to give in to Lear's demand/command of constituting himself as *the* objet petit a of and thereby retaining wholeness with the Other. Cordelia functioning in the Analyst's discourse *hysterizes* Lear the king (not to mention again his being a political trope and master signifier with its semiotic function) into being a human subject, and Lear's confrontation with this split *in* and *from* the beloved Other is anything but ceremonial.

Sincerely believing that he operating as master is that which is desired of him by the others in the (or his) symbolic order, Lear is challenged by his two "ungrateful" daughters, Goneril and Regan, who aspire to be masters themselves of their allotted jurisdiction. Yet, the challenge they pose is not simply a matter of civic discontent or that of filial malcontent and ingratitude. Their humiliating treatment of Lear shakes to the ground the king's unquestioned faith of his symbolic function in relation to the Other. The meaning of his symbolic existence has always subsisted in his function as master (and king), until he discovers the shocking truth that what (so he has believed) is desired of him is in fact *undesirable*. His function as their master signifier is undesired, which results in the disintegration of the entire signifying chain of meaning in his mind. What is a man, or any man, in the symbolic order, if devoid and deprived of his symbolic meaning? Lear asks in distress, "[d]oes any here know me? This is not Lear./ Does Lear

walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes/ Either his notion weakens, his discernings/
 Are lethargied—Ha! Waking? ‘Tis not so./ Who is it that can tell me who I am?” (1.4.223-7). This is no mere question of political or patriarchal faith. This is a question asked by one who can no longer be sure of his (semiotic) function that defines the meaning of his symbolic existence. At this point, Lear’s (p)lot bespeaks the tragic version of Hans Christian Anderson’s emperor realizing that he is walking naked in the dark.

It is in Edgar disguised as Poor Tom that Lear finds and identifies with his mirror image—a man living naked in the cave outside the symbolic order. I will not question and discuss here Edgar’s motive in assuming a disguise as such,⁹⁵ but I would like to contend that, like Cordelia, Edgar as Poor Tom (however unwittingly or otherwise) functions in and actually completes the Analyst’s discourse for Lear. For those who are securely anchored in the symbolic, Edgar as Poor Tom talks *nonsense*. Noticeably, Poor Tom never directly addresses Lear’s or anyone’s questions. His discourse, shifting foci all the time, is fraught with enigmatic “half-saids”—not Fool-like conscious puns and ridicules, but an analyst’s “half-saids.” In Lacanian terms, Edgar as Poor Tom operates as *the subject of the enunciation*, in contradistinction to *the subject of the statement*. As Dylan Evans points out, “[i]n designing the enunciation as unconscious, Lacan affirms that the source of speech is not the ego, nor consciousness, but the unconscious; language comes from the Other, and the idea that ‘I am master of my discourse is only an illusion. The very word ‘I’ (*Je*) is ambiguous” (55). There is no conscious “unity” or “totality” of the “I” in Poor Tom’s discourse. Having met Poor Tom, Lear’s own discourse

⁹⁵ Critics such as Janet Adelman and Harold Bloom have taken an interest in examining Edgar’s avoidance of reconciliation with his father by dint of a madman disguise. Adelman, for instance, suggests that by disguising as Poor Tom, Edgar punishes himself and turns his revenge against Gloucester’s injustice (and Edmund’s intrigue) upon himself: “The passivity and even the masochism of Poor Tom serve Edgar well: for by turning punishment against the self, he can avoid turning it against the world” (“Introduction,” *Twentieth Century Interpretation of King Lear*, 17).

disintegrates: he, too, becomes *the subject of the enunciation*, unlike what he used to be in the earlier scenes as confident king and master, i.e., *the subject of the statement*, or, in his case, the royal subject who was prone to pronounce finite statements with the reliable royal plural “We.” Hence, what appears as “madness” in Lear to those still anchoring in the symbolic is a human subject now oriented toward the real. Those who remain faithful to Lear’s symbolic function as master and king and to the totality of the symbolic order cannot bear to see him split as such. In Act 4, scene 7, a doctor is called in by Cordelia to “[c]ure this great *breach* in his abused nature!” [Italics mine] (15). Yet, it is only when he is split from his symbolic function that Lear comes to recognize he is nothing more than “a very foolish fond old man” (4.7.61), who can no longer rest the meaning of his existence upon the royal fabrics that made him *the* master signifier. He now recognizes that he does not bestow meaning upon the signifying chain of the symbolic order. He is no longer the symbolic F(O)ther, but a *real* father, a biological father and *human subject*, and nothing more.

Perhaps we all know that, before Shakespeare, “the ancient story of King Lear had always ended happily. In the popular folktale of Cinderella, to which the legend of Lear’s daughters bears a significant resemblance, the youngest and virtuous daughter triumphs over her two older wicked sisters and is married to her princely wooer. Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), the earliest known version of the Lear story, records that, after Lear is overthrown by his sons-in-law (more than by his daughters), he is restored to his throne by the intervention of the French King and is allowed to enjoy his kingdom and Cordelia’s love until his natural death” (Bevington, ed., 1167). In these earlier versions, it is not difficult to detect that the plot of *King Lear* orients toward the symbolic—i.e., Lear’s reunification with the symbolic order (Lear with his symbolic [socio-political] function and semiotic trope lost and regained). In these

versions, it is not so much that Cordelia and Lear triumph as that *the symbolic order* triumphs and prevails. Shakespeare's refusal to give in to symbolic orientation as such in his dramatic narrative design does leave more puzzling mysteries than finite "statements." Questions such as "Why does Cordelia die?" (A. C. Bradley) never die and rest assured. Is the ending provided by Shakespeare meant to complete Lear's lessons on the one hand and the pathos of a great tragedy on the other? A fact known to and observed by many (Bevington, Salgado, Bloom), Dr. Samuel Johnson simply could not bring himself to read and accept an ending as such.⁹⁶

An ending in which both Cordelia and Lear live and live "happily ever after" points to symbolic unity and reunification, and this ending Shakespeare's version defies. Such an ending is not a complete lack, however, in the latter version (and vision). To certain degree, the ending of the "subplot" between Edgar and Gloucester fulfills that which is unfulfillable in Lear's (p)lot. Lear's (p)lot is designed for something else and something more. It points to that which goes beyond the symbolic and that which can never be realized in the symbolic order, namely the primordial cut between self and Other. Lear's five heart-rending "nevers" in his last speech testify to this horror of horrors—never to be completely united again with the Other once one enters and stays in the symbolic order. In this sense, Cordelia has to die. However Kent wishes his master to stay alive and continue functioning as master for him, it is Kent who truly understands and stays Edgar's hand in the latter's effort to resuscitate Lear. He—together with his master—

⁹⁶ Gamini Salgado, for instance, informs that "[f]or nearly a century and a half, until the great Victorian tragic actor William Macready restored to the stage in 1838 something akin to the original, what had been staged as the tragedy of *King Lear* was a version (published in 1681) by Nahum Tate, who had undertaken the task of 'improving' Shakespeare's play" (*King Lear: Text and Performance* 9). According to Salgado, Tate's "rectifying" version includes "the elimination of the Fool, the invention of a love intrigue between Edgar and Cordelia, and the survival of the latter and of Lear himself in a restored and reunited kingdom" (Ibid. 10). Salgado points out that it was Tate's version, particularly in view of its altered ending, that Samuel Johnson preferred to the Shakespearean original (Ibid. 11).

seems to finally understand that the tragic gulf does not lie so much between the living and the dead as between existence as hole and ex-istence as whole. It is Kent who complies in the end with Lear's desire of the freedom to desire (reunion with the beloved Other through death). It is no doubt the greatest service this most loyal subject performs for his king.⁹⁷

In discussing aspects of the novel, E. M. Forster famously remarks, “[i]f it was not for death and marriage I do not know how the average novelist would conclude” (95). The real reason for such an arrangement, however conventional or banal it would seem and has become, perhaps lies in the fact that, while marriage signifies a mode of symbolic orientation (or, a mode of the human/narrative subject's symbolization), death traverses the symbolic, which entails the primordial cut that may be illusorily veiled by substitutive signifiers such as marriage and religion yet can never be undone. In truth, what is the symbolic order, together with all its substitutive signifiers, of human existence, if it were not “creation *ex nihilo*”—“starting with a hole” (*The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* 121). Ironically, the symbolic does not so much unite one with the Other as separate one from the Other,⁹⁸ and this is the reason for the symbolic to exist with a

⁹⁷ Roberto Speziale-Bagliacca, however, proposes a different reading of the character of Kent, as he does those of Lear (as an infant-king) and his three daughters (perceived and demanded by Lear the infant-king as mothers). According to Speziale-Bagliacca, Kent aspires (even calculates) to become “the apple of Lear's blind eyes”: “Kent's secret design--secret for him, too, being perhaps an unconscious design--is most probably to replace the three daughters in the King's affections, with the whole plan culminating in a great scene of reconciliation. In order to do this, he must separate the daughters from their father. Kent's hatred for Oswald is excessive--a paranoid hatred--while the steward himself is totally loyal to Goneril. Presumably Kent is so hostile toward him because he has projected onto him the part of himself that wants to sever the ties between father and daughters” (*The King & the Adulteress* 122, 117). My counter-argument, as mentioned, would be that it is *Kent*, and not anyone else in the play, who stays Edgar's hand in a frantic effort to revive the heart-broken king. It is *Kent* who understands Lear's dying wish for a reunion with Cordelia in death. Nevertheless, while I may not agree with Speziale-Bagliacca's reading of Kent as the rivalrous courtier (and Cordelia as the rivalrous and negatively subversive daughter), Roberto Speziale-Bagliacca is the one critic who also points out Lear's obstinate reluctance to separation from the Other, or, in his words, from “Eden” where there is no split between one and the (m)Other.

⁹⁸ Take, for instance, the union-finale between Amelia Sedley and her faithful knight, Colonel

chain of endless signifiers fashioned at high speed in humankind's frantic efforts to annihilate *nihil*. Trite as the following saying sounds, death unites all—the powerful and the powerless, the rich and the poor, but, more significantly, one and the desired/loved Other. At the end of his life, Lear comes to realize that even his position as master and king, or the language of love, or gods as signifiers cannot make the *nihil* of human existence go away. Life is a fair game: to live and function in the symbolic order and obtain symbolic happiness, one has to accept the cut and separation from the Other and desire *metonymically*. (And this is what I term as *symbolic jouissance*, an affective enjoyment in/of the symbolic.) The puppet-master's last words in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848) say it all: "Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?—Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out" (809). There can be no *real* (re)union except in the real. And even if the real *jouissance* cannot be otherwise achieved than in or through death, at his (p)lot's end Lear refuses to lack (for to continue one's being in the symbolic is to experience lacking). Perhaps then it is no exaggeration to claim that Shakespeare was one of the first and greatest authors who understood and optimized the captivating powers of the real. (Re)union in the real—between Romeo and Juliet, Lear and Cordelia—paves way for that between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, Maggie and Tom Tulliver, and many others that come afterwards in human narratives. The (p)lot of Lear traverses the symbolic and orients toward the real. King Lear is King *Real*, anagrammatically and humanly speaking.

Dobbin in William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848). The final scene reads a prospering family, with loving husband, wife and children, passing through one of the London fairs. It is no doubt a loving and mutually devoted union between the hero and the heroine. Yet, the novelist curiously ends this "happily-ever-after" scene with "a sigh" of Amelia who is busy contemplating that her loving husband loves their daughter, "his little Janey," more than he does her: " 'Fonder than he is of me,' Emmy thinks, with a sigh. But he never said a word to Amelia that was not kind and gentle; or thought of a want of hers that he did not try to gratify" (809). What can be more revealing than this masterly touch of Thackeray on the limit of symbolic happiness or enjoyment as well as the unbridgeable divide, however (in)visible, between one and the Other?

[VI]

The *Alice* Books and the Dialectization of Desire

Like Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Alice of Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books is faced with threats of *nihil*, nothing(ness), of language and linguistic signification that define and bestow meaning upon the symbolic order of human existence. *Lear* and *Alice*, being an old man and a young child a little more than two centuries and a half apart, are both tried in their respective contexts and pushed to such a mentally confounding limit that the protagonists begin to question their own subjectivities as well as the intricate relationship between self and other (mostly through the use, disuse, and abuse of language). They come to question: *who and what are you, and, in comparison, who and what am I? What do you desire of me and vice versa?* And to quote Lévi-Strauss here, "what does 'to mean' mean" [Emphasis mine] (*Myth and Meaning* 12)? To question linguistic signification is a dangerous business, for it is never a mere question(ing) as such. To doubt the signifying meaning of language is to doubt the meaning of human existence that is anchored in and signified by the symbolic constituent of language. In this sense, both Shakespeare's and Lewis Carroll's works manifest the perilous relation between the linguistic question, *what "to mean" means*, and the ontological and existential conundrum, *what (human) being is*. For now I shall not linger on a comparative study of Shakespeare and Carroll, of *Lear* and *Alice*. This present section pertains to expounding the relationship between Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books and a Lacanian understanding of the *Alice* narratives, with a particular emphasis on the narratological phenomena of the *Alices'* plot energetics and orientations. I will base my following discussion on the five Lacanian primes: desire, language, knowledge, jouissance, and, this time, *the imaginary*.

The Victorian Oxford don Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's literary creations, *Alice's*

Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), have invited as multitudinous and diverse critical interpretations and commentaries as there are the vivid and beloved characters in the *Alice* books. Indeed, the *Alice* books are two of the rarities that, having in the first place conceived out of Dodgson's interplay with the Liddell girls and having had children as his intended audience/readers, shine within and even rise above the genre of children's literature and continue to engage the interests, according to Nina Demurova's listing, of "philosophers, logicians, mathematicians, physicists, psychologists, folklorists, politicians, as well as literary critics and armchair readers" (Bloom, ed., 168). Just to name a couple of well-known Carroll scholarships here: Carroll's subversive logic of time and space as exemplified by the design of the chess game in *Through the Looking-Glass* has been famously put forth by Alexander L. Taylor,⁹⁹ while Elizabeth Sewell's seminal study of the nonsensical traits of the *Alice* books has been widely anthologized,¹⁰⁰ as much as William Empson's psychoanalytic interpretation of "The Child as Swain."¹⁰¹ In addition to all these heterogeneous literary exegeses and investigations, the aspect of the brutal laughs yielded in the *Alices* has been brought into relation by Nina Demurova to the "folk

⁹⁹ See Taylor's book *The White Knight: A Study of C. L. Dodgson* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1952).

¹⁰⁰ Especially the chapter entitled "The Balance of Brillig" in her book *The Field of Nonsense* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1952), 115-29.

¹⁰¹ Empson's chapter has been anthologized, for instance, by Robert Phillips in *Aspects of Alice* (New York: The Vanguard Press, Inc., 1971), 344-73; by Donald J. Gray in the Norton Critical Edition of *Lewis Carroll: Alice in Wonderland* (New York: Norton, 1992), 344-57; and by Harold Bloom in *Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2006), 39-67. In this chapter, Empson famously argues that "the sea of tears she swims in was the amniotic fluid" and that, suffering from the "birth-trauma," "Alice peering through the hole into the garden may be wanting a return to the womb as well as an escape from it" (Gray, ed., 350). Empson also puts forth: "[t]he symbolic completeness of Alice's experience is I think important. She runs the whole gamut; she is a father in getting down the hole, a foetus at the bottom, and can only be born by becoming a mother and producing her own amniotic fluid. Whether his [Dodgson's] mind played the trick of putting this into the story or not he has the feelings that would correspond to it. A desire to include all sexuality in the girl child, the least obviously sexed of human creatures, the one that keeps its sex in the safest place, was an important part of their fascination for him" (Ibid. 350-51).

carnival tradition” that can be dated back to the Middle Ages.¹⁰² Other contextualizing efforts have been equally attempted by critics and scholars such as Peter Coveney, Florence Becker Lennon, Phyllis Greenacre, Hugh Haughton, Roger Henkle, and Donald Rackin.¹⁰³ Yet, again, for my own purpose here, I shall veer away from efforts as such, irrespective of how or how *much* Dodgson modeled his fantasy works on his contemporary Victorian society influenced and shaped by Darwinian theories, religious debates, and political partisanship, as well as on the literary heritages (such as the notion of the Romantic child and childhood) Dodgson is credited to be heir of. My own psychoanalytic study of the *Alice* books will also differ from other extant psychoanalytic projects such as Phyllis Greenacre’s *Swift and Carroll: A Psychoanalytic Study of Two Lives* (dated back to 1955) in that I do not intend to read between the lines and pages of the works produced and psychoanalyze flagrant discrepancies between Charles L. Dodgson the punctilious, if not over-scrupulous, Oxford don and Lewis Carroll the wildly imaginative and daringly rule-breaking fantasy writer.

Critics such as Roger Henkle observe that “[t]here is no plot to the book; instead, dream thoughts pull seemingly disorganized elements together” (Gray, ed., 359). Indeed, the episodic nature of the *Alice* books have been much commented upon (and, interestingly, commentaries on the *Alice* books tend to be no less episodic, briefly touching on one character or interlude of the books and jumping to the next as if they were discrete units to be discussed as such: namely, episode A signifies X and episode B signifies Y, etc.). Yet, what has been overlooked is the fact that, much like the *Arabian Nights*, translated and imported to England in the early eighteenth century, the *Alice*

¹⁰² See Demurova’s chapter “Toward a Definition of *Alice*’s Genre: The Folktale and Fairy-Tale Connections” in Harold Bloom’s anthology (*Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*), 155-70.

¹⁰³ Excerpts of these authors’ works on the *Alice* books and C. L. Dodgson as Lewis Carroll can be found in Donald J. Gray’s and Harold Bloom’s anthological editions.

books manifest an overall desire for narrative life. Not until the very end, none of the episodes of Alice's adventures in either book seems finite or is "end-able." The mad Tea-Party, for instance, appears quite capable of going on forever, with or without Alice's presence and participation (albeit her involvement does change the dynamics of the narratives). The episodes themselves can change lengths or "sizes," just like the heroine herself experiences a constant change of body size in Wonderland. They—the episodes—all resemble the Mouse's tail/tale that can curtail or expand ad infinitum. Like Scheherazade's story-telling, the *Alice* books suggest a fear of death—not only the human death as many critics have noticed¹⁰⁴ but also the narrative death, the death of plot and narrative life. Noticeably, Alice the heroine is constantly pushed or dragged forward into the midst of an episode/adventure and rushed along to the next, which, despite all the "rule-breaking" nonsensical elements at work in the books, is *the rule* of the kind of narrative that insists on the forward-going life force of plot by means of episodic interminability.

Critics such as Florence Becker Lennon and Phyllis Greenacre have also observed that, if there is any at all, the plot of the *Alice* books can be nothing more than "classic" or 'universal,' and by these terms they refer to a "nostalgic" or even "regressive" human wish, as other scholars do not hesitate to point out, for a Garden to be Eden. Lennon, for instance, remarks that "[i]t is the plot of our life here on earth, and any honest story that conforms to it, adds to it, finds new forms and characters for it, even for the thousandth telling, will move us. [...]. The wish can be fulfilled only in a dream, and the happy ending is—to awaken and find one is still oneself, and can trace some of the dream

¹⁰⁴ Karen Coats, who has written on *Alice through the Looking-Glass* through the lens of Lacanian theory, also confirms this rather universal interpretation of an inherent fear of human death in the *Alice* books. Only, in Lacanian parlance, Coats rightly names this death as "symbolic death." Coats writes, "[s]ymbolic death is what Carroll is trying to save Alice from; it represents the dissolution of organic totality into linguistic fragmentation. The entry into the Symbolic, which is where death enters the story, is our collective death" (*Looking Glasses and Neverlands* 85).

elements, as Alice did, to familiar sights and sounds” (Bloom, ed., 36). I, on the other hand, would like to propose that the plot of the *Alice* books is nothing “classic” or “universal” in the sense that it uniquely orients toward *the imaginary*, and by *imaginary* I do not mean that the *Alice* books are imagined (as are all literary works to whatever degree) or fantastical (simply because the events of the books take place in a dream-like realm or dreamscape). The plot of the *Alice* books orients toward the imaginary in the Lacanian sense of the mirror stage. Of course, the Alice of the *Alice* books is older than the human subject of or undergoing the mirror stage—Alice being more or less seven years old and the latter being an infant of six to eighteen-month old. No matter. By associating the *Alice* books with the Lacanian notion of the mirror stage, I do not intend to examine, as Karen Coats cautions, this relation in a simplistic and reductive manner with “an interpretation that runs along the lines of the infant who experiences the joy of perceiving herself as a coherent entity and is both empowered and displaced by her ideal reflection” (Coats 84). True, such an interpretation would not only dwarf the true significance but also brush aside complications of the mirror stage as, according to Lacan, the stage of the *I*-formation of any human subject. Hence, while Coats postulates Carroll’s authorial desire as that which situates Liddell-Alice within *his* Imaginary (in compensation for *his* Symbolic castration) and easily discards associations between the *Alice* books and the mirror stage, I would like to champion the *imaginary* attributes and unveil complications of such a stage underpinning and sustaining both Alice’s subject-(de)formation and the *Alice* narratives. I would like to argue, for instance, that Alice travels in Wonderland and the realm of the Looking-Glass with her subjectivity, her cogito, being critically challenged and subject to reexamination by creatures functioning *as imagos of the imaginary*.

Unlike Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) and Franz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*

(1915), Carroll's *Alice* books do not aim at undoing or unmaking the speaking human subject. Nonetheless, they do yield their human subject to a crisis of faith in the cogito. They do question Alice as *the subject of the statement* who enters the realms of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass already functioning in the University's discourse. The more Alice "thinks" (and is pushed to think), the more she comes to doubt she *is*. By the time Alice encounters Humpty Dumpty, she begins to account herself as: "My *name* is Alice, but—" (Gray, ed., 160). Signifiers of the symbolic, such as "names," can no longer promise a sense of security or integrity of identity (re)presentation to the mind-boggled human child. It is as if Alice traversed back to the mirror stage of the "I-formation" wherein the Other is ever present to say or gainsay, "yes (or no), this is (or is not) *you*, child." Ironically, creatures in the realms of Wonderland and the Looking-glass do not function as guiding parents or the affirming and role-modeling symbolic Other; the creatures are not there to assist Alice in forming consistent, lucid, and reliable subjectivity. Constructively formative "intervention" of the symbolic Other through an effective use of language remains a lack, leaving Alice in a prolonged *imaginary* relation with the creatures.

In Lacanian terms I argue that the Wonderland and Looking-Glass creatures are "specular images"—"thresholds of the visible world"—that function in "role[s] of the mirror apparatus in the appearance of *doubles*" [Italics original] (*Écrits* 5). Here Phyllis Greenacre is very right in having observed in Carroll and his writings the central importance of *sight* and *seeing* and, in my view even more significantly, a substitutive relationship between *seeing* and *eating*: "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is replete with descriptions of bizarre and unassimilated body feelings, which reproduce—in various body parts as well as in the total body—the phallic form and changes. [...]. All of these changes follow eating, or drinking. It seems that in Charles' own development,

looking became a substitute for the acquisitiveness of eating” (217-18). I would like to argue more, if not the other way around, building on this correlation between *eating* and *seeing* in the *Alice* narratives: acts of aggression in forms of eating and devouring cannibalism are caused by *specular* aggressivity in the first place—by Alice’s anxiety-provoking *specular* experience of her own bodily changes vis-à-vis the creatures as specular images. In any case, mirror images, or imagos, call for *identification* on the one hand and on the other evoke *aggressivity*, both of which prominently feature the order of the imaginary. According to Lacan, both attributes—*identification* and *aggressivity*—pertain to the imaginary. He astutely points out:

A child who beats another child says that he himself was beaten; a child who sees another child fall, cries. Similarly, it is by identifying with the other that he experiences the whole range of bearing and displays reactions—whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behaviors, the slave identifying with the despot, the actor with the spectator, the seduced with the seducer. (*Écrits* 20)

In identifying with the creature-imagos *on and through sight*, Alice “experiences the whole range of bearing and displays reactions.” Identification with imagos through comparison and contrast can lead to much rivalry, especially when the human subject is faced with threats of self-fragmentation or self-disintegration vis-à-vis a more coordinated, more unified, hence more “perfect” (mirror) image posed by the imago. Rivalry as such would, in turn, give rise to aggressivity; it can, as Lacan illumines, lead to “the awakening of his [the subject’s] desire for the object of the other’s desire: here the primordial confluence precipitates into aggressive competition, from which develops the triad of other people, ego, and object” (Ibid. 21).¹⁰⁵ The *Alice* books exemplify this triad of animal-creatures as “other people” (or “imagos,” to be more exact), Alice as “ego,” and

¹⁰⁵ For Lacan’s more exhaustive discussion of the phenomenon of aggressivity, see his article “Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis” (*Écrits*), 10-30.

knowledge as “object” (again, to be more precise in this case, “object petit a”) and this triangular relationship will be discussed shortly.

Seen in this light, Alice does not simply encounter the creatures in the realms of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass as casual or haphazard adventures. There is constant mental comparison and contrast, even hostile and aggressive competition at work during the adventures, and aggressivity between Alice and the creatures in both books has been much discussed and largely commented upon by critics.¹⁰⁶ What I would like to add to extant discussions of aggression and aggressivity in the *Alice* books is a Lacanian reading that the human child measures and identifies her self against the creatures as *non-ideal* and predominantly *negative* imagos, and that resulting aggressivity may be far from being “casual,” given the rivalrous relation between self and other along the imaginary axis. As the books illustrate, it is a rather lonely adventure of traversing in the imaginary (again, the stage of the *I*-formation), with almost no positive imagos and definitively no role-modeling symbolic Other to identify with.¹⁰⁷ Having suffered more *de*-formation of her *I* function than otherwise, Alice dolefully exclaims to the White Queen, “[o]nly it is so *very* lonely here!” [Italics original] (Gray, ed., 152). Indeed, no literary text has better demonstrated the chaos of subject formation during the mirror stage when a child can experience neither consistency nor certainty of the

¹⁰⁶ Nina Auerbach, for instance, remarks that “Alice’s attitude toward the animals she encounters is often one of casual cruelty” (Gray, ed., 339). In addition to aggressivity, cruelty and violence, Auerbach also observes a “Carrollian cannibalism” in the *Alice* books. For more discussion, see her article “Alice in Wonderland: A Curious Child” (Gray, ed., 334-44).

¹⁰⁷ A couple of scholars have paid attention to the aura of loneliness amidst all confusion and chaos in the topsy-turvy worlds of *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. William Empson, for one, remarks that “[o]nce at least in each book a cry of loneliness goes up from Alice at the oddity beyond sympathy or communication of the world she has entered—whether that in which the child is shut by weakness, or the adult by the renunciations necessary for the ideal and the worldly way of life (the strength of the snobbery is to imply that these are the same” (Gray, ed., 354; Bloom, ed., 63-64). My own interpretation of the theme of (the human child’s) loneliness roots particularly in a lack of *positive identification* at the mirror stage, the “infrastructure” of Alice’s adventures.

others' responses to its own image than the *Alice* books. Many scholars have "compared and contrasted" whether Alice is (or is not) more intellectually and emotionally "mature" than (most of) the creatures in the books. Such commentaries, in fact, unwittingly testify or even lend weight to the imaginary relation I here put forth between the human subject and Carroll's creature-imagos. It is especially in this sense that I argue for the *imaginary* plot orientation of the *Alice* narratives.

Having fallen down the rabbit hole, Alice suffers her subjectivity to be poked holes in. A series of bodily changes in Wonderland immediately shatters the heroine's sense of her body-self as unified, coordinated, consistent, and whole. The split between what her body *should* be and what it *can* be gives rise to Alice's first self-doubt: "Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can feel a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is, "Who in the world am I?" Ah, *that's* the great puzzle!" [Italics original] (Gray, ed., 15). Creatures such as the puffing Caterpillar and the grinning Cheshire Cat she encounters later on by no means help her sort out this "great puzzle." Indeed, their linguistic evasiveness and ambiguities only add more confusion to this (existential, ontological, and linguistic) puzzle than answer it with the instrumentality of a lucid and constructive language for "poor Alice." Critics and readers have hardly failed to notice that Alice's (or Alices') experience in Wonderland and the realm of the Looking-Glass turns out to be very much a bodily experience (and a terrifying one as well). Yet, the "horror of horrors" deep-seated in the experience of any human subject caught in or undergoing the mirror stage lies, in truth, in the impotence of language: responding to Saussure's structuralist reading and model of a corresponding relation between the signifier and the signified, Lacan does not hesitate to pinpoint that there is always something in and about language

that bars an idealistic one-to-one linguistic relationship as such. A signifier, at best, as Lacan tells us, represents the human subject to another signifier (rather than the signified) and ad infinitum, thus entangling the human subject in the metonymic and metaphoric web of language comprised of chains of signifiers all circling around, without ever getting home to, that which is desired (that which is desired to be consciously expressed or articulated). Given the Lacanian axiomatic argument that acquisition of language anchors the human subject within the symbolic order (within the loci of the Other's unconscious, consciousness, and web of desires) and thereby bars, splits, and alienates the subject from his/her unconscious, the more language is used, let alone being abused, the more the human subject experiences holes and splits in linguistic signification and production of meaning. Hence, Alice's bodily experience in the worlds of Wonderland and Looking-Glass is in essence entwined with and embodied by her linguistic experience; namely, Alice experiences her body-self through and *qua* language, and vice versa. Nevertheless, the indeterminacy of neither (one's) body nor (the o/Other's) language gives occasion to crises in Alice's subject formation at this stage and results in as much excitement and wonders as anxiety and frightening feelings of powerlessness. Alice admits to the Caterpillar that "one doesn't like changing so often, you know" (Ibid. 41). But the Caterpillar, being a creature, an *imago*, of the imaginary (simply put, an imaginary other), rather than a symbolic Other giving out constructively formative directives, *doesn't know* and cannot sympathize. The ever shape-changing Cheshire Cat further embodies and illumines for Alice the illusory notion of wholeness and the disorientating shape-shifting "reality" of self; in other words, it is nothing more than *méconnaissance*.¹⁰⁸ The image of a fragmented and fragment-able body-self as

¹⁰⁸ According to Lacan, the illusory sense of wholeness and unity experienced by the child in the mirror stage belongs to *méconnaissance*. Dylan Evans helps articulate: "[i]t is by misunderstanding and misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) that the subject comes to the imaginary knowledge of himself (*me-connaissance*) which is constitutive of the ego (E. 306). The ego is thus an illusory kind of self-knowledge based on a fantasy of self-mastery and unity" (*An Introductory*

such disconcerts rather than comfort the human child: as Alice says to the Cat, not without a smack of protest, “I wish you wouldn’t keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly; you make one quite giddy!” (Ibid. 53). In the imaginary, Alice has to learn (and luckily she does learn or, at least, get used to) the fact that certainty of body-self wholeness is not to be taken for granted; that her human existence guarantees nothing—neither ready unity of self nor unquestioned mastery of that unity, that wholeness. She, like any human subject, is born with neither. She has to master both.

Alice enters Wonderland and the Looking-Glass with a desire to know. Functioning in the University’s discourse, Alice relies on the totality and authority of the knowledge she has gained in the symbolic as a symbolized (or institutionalized) human subject. Knowledge as such renders the human subject (illusorily) *centralized, unified, and whole*. Of course, her experience in and of the imaginary proves otherwise. The *Alice* books manifest the confounding truth that to know is *not* to be (and thereby empowered to be) *more*—more complete, more *whole*. Pieces of acquired knowledge, including self-knowledge, do not add up to the quantitiveness and qualitiveness of one’s being. Rather, the more Alice gets to “know” (to know that she does not in fact know), the more she experiences hole in her being, emptiness in her ready-made replies and speeches, and self-alienation from the three primes constitutive of human subjectivity: body, name, and discourse. To unveil this truth about knowledge and being, the *Alice* books have her constantly engage in competitions with creatures she runs into *for knowledge*; knowledge is the object that gets transmitted, passed around, vied for, seized upon, and grabbed at. Who is the one that is really in the know (in possession of knowledge) becomes *the question* around which the plot of the *Alice* books centers.

Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis 94-95). Furthermore, “in the imaginary order, self-knowledge (*me-connaissance*) is synonymous with misunderstanding (*méconnaissance*), because the process by which the EGO is formed in the mirror stage is at the same time the institution of alienation from the symbolic determination of being” (109).

Given Lacan's argument in his *Seminar XVII* that knowledge functions as means of jouissance, he who possesses knowledge takes the ownership of the locus of jouissance. In this light, competition for knowledge in the *Alice* books entails au fond competition for jouissance. Lacan sheds more light on the nature of jouissance in his *Ethics* seminar and elsewhere: in a word, (jouissance is) *jealousie*. One does not, cannot, and shall not love one's neighbor precisely because one is convinced that the primal lost object, the locus of jouissance, lies within the grasp of the o/Other rather than one's own. It is human ethicality well within the bounds and in service of the pleasure principle that submits the human subject to ethical laws and principles (e.g., "Thou shalt love thy neighbors"). Carroll's *Alice* books defy such human ethical laws, and, in doing so—in abounding in the jouissance of transgression—refuse both the heroine(s) and the reader the safeguard of the pleasure principle: the books manifest that Alice does not, cannot, and shall not love the creatures as neighbors; neither do, nor can, nor shall the creatures love one another in an ethical neighborly fashion. Knowledge as the lost object *and* means of (regaining) jouissance has to be vied for, hence rendering topsy-turvily cruel, aggressive, violent, and "immoral" (even "amoral") wonder-worlds. Dodgson-Carroll's Biographer Derek Hudson informs that in 1911 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* "as reading for school children was once banned [...] on the ground that speaking animals were degrading" (qtd. in Greenacre 10). We understand it is not so much that Carroll's animal-creatures are morally degrading or capriciously, even maliciously, violent as that the writer perhaps knows too well the relationship among self, other (particularly the imaginary specular other), and the nature of j[eal]ouissance.

It is not simply owing to the workings of subversive nonsense that chaos perfumes the *Alice* books. In fact, as Elizabeth Sewall memorably argues, the "field of nonsense" is constructed and directed by reason; nonsense is "a construction subject to its own laws"

(5)¹⁰⁹; that is to say, nonsense is, at bottom, sense (and logic) in its uttermost subjective terms. I would like to argue that the topsy-turvy chaos of the wonder-worlds also derives its centrifugal plot energetics from a confluence of all the four Lacanian discourses—of the Master, the University, and Hysteric and the Analyst. Each creature, Alice included, functions within at least one discourse as such and has a peculiar relation to knowledge as object. Each discourse sets and is set by another discourse in motion. For instance, both the puffing Caterpillar and the grinning Cheshire Cat appear opaquely enigmatic to Alice and can be said to function within the Analyst’s discourse. The Cheshire Cat’s ever-changing body itself makes a cogent statement about the analyst’s enigmatic “half-said”—it disorients Alice as the symbolic human subject of the University’s discourse and subverts her accustomed ways of perception and pronouncement. Alice’s own subversion and aggressivity come out during her recitation of the poem “You are old, Father William” after dialoguing with the frustrating Caterpillar who never yields a straight answer. The Queen of Hearts, on the other hand, functions within the Master’s discourse: with a castrating command, “off with his/her head!,” her royal Highness takes prerogative delight in splitting her subjects and tolerates no split in her own knowledge of and authority over who should be decapitated or castrated until later challenged by Alice. Creatures such as the Mad Hatter in Wonderland, Humpty Dumpty and the Red Queen in the realm of the Looking-Glass function within the Hysteric’s discourse, in addition to others.¹¹⁰ They are trapped and in turn (in)tend to trap Alice in an *imaginary* relation: they regard the human child as a threatening competitor for knowledge as

¹⁰⁹ For more discussion of nonsense and nonsense literature (of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll), see Elizabeth Sewall’s classic study entitled *The Field of Nonsense* (1970) and, in particular, the first and widely anthologized chapter in the book, entitled “Sense and Nonsense” (1-6).

¹¹⁰ Given her position as queen, the Red Queen functions in the Hysteric’s *and* the Master’s discourses. Her discourse of the Hysteric is, in fact, much empowered by her discourse of the Master. Thus, though annoyed, Alice stands (or sits) in awe before the Red Queen, subjecting herself to the latter’s excruciating questioning. Humpty Dumpty, too, functions simultaneously in two discourses—those of the Hysteric and the University. His “pedantry” and “jargoneering” have been much remarked upon. See, for instance, J. B. Priestley’s article “A Note on Humpty Dumpty” (Bloom, ed., 13-17).

prized object and consequently persist in dispossessing the latter's knowledge, together with the latter's enjoyment of knowledge. In doing so, the creatures believe they can outwit, "out-know" and "out-possess" their human rival. It is the confluence and interplay of discourses as such in one nonsensical world that hysterize Alice on many an occasion and enable the *Alice* books to exert a powerfully centrifugal energetics as well as to end the heroine's adventures centrifugally.

Interpreted in this light, Alice's adventures turn into a series of epistemological struggles, and the creatures not only dialectize but also problematize Alice's initiative desire to know. Lacan demystifies this human desire. The desire to know, as he remarks, is the desire *not to know*. On many occasions, Alice, "the curious child" as Nina Auerbach calls her, is shown to be *not so curious*; she is rather quick to evade truth-poking questions bluntly put to her. When the Caterpillar asks her the second time, "[w]ho are you?," Alice starts to feel "a little irritated" and shifts the Caterpillar's attention by directing the question to the latter, "I think you ought to tell me who *you* are, first" (Gray, ed., 36). When the Cheshire Cat tells her bluntly, "Oh, you ca'n't [sic] help that, we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad," Alice, unconvinced, again shifts the Cat's attention by directing the question to the latter, "And how do you know that you're mad?" (Ibid. 51). When the Sheep in the shop insists on Alice being "a little goose," Alice feels a little "offended, so there was no more conversation for a minute or two" (Ibid. 155-56). When Humpty Dumpty questions the meaning of Alice's name, "*my* name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost," Alice evades his examination by asking instead: " 'Why do you sit out here all alone?' said Alice, not wishing to begin an argument" (Ibid. 160). To top it all, it is her desire *not to know* that she may exist only as a creation of the Red King's dream, as Tweedledee suggests, that she takes care no one should wake the

snorting king. The Red King thus significantly remains the only one with whom Alice does not interact in order that she, even the Red King himself, can evade a heavy dose of unpleasant (self-)knowledge upon waking.

Being imagos of the imaginary, the creatures mirror Alice's desire not to know. Humpty Dumpty in his turn does not wish to know that he is nothing more than an egg (and accordingly being too fragile to survive a fall from his high wall). He "look[s] away from Alice," mumbling, "to be called an egg—*very!*" [Italics original] (Gray, ed., 159). As it turns out, Humpty Dumpty allows no split both in his bodily existence and in *his* (self-)knowledge. Or, when, prior to their caucus-race, the Duck challenges the Mouse to explain his grammatical usage of "it" in the latter's long-winded sentence (and narrative) about "the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury [who] found it advisable—," the Mouse is seen to "crossly" reply to his interrogator with a rhetorical answer, "of course you know what 'it' means," and to go on ignoring the rest of the Duck's persisting and apparently irritating question (Ibid. 22). The Hatter, for another instance, has no desire to know that he behaves rudely to Alice (and to others in general). When Alice criticizes his manners, "You should learn not to make personal remarks [...], it's very rude," the Hatter, "open[ing] his eyes very wide on hearing this," throws out a riddle without any answer as his best self-defense in the moment, "[w]hy is a raven like a writing-desk?" (Ibid. 55). As the *Alice* books demonstrate, knowledge, being itself fraught with holes and aporias, is used by Alice and the creatures themselves to cover up self-fragmenting holes and splits as such, which, unhappily, reveal rather than conceal more that are to come.

For Alice and the creatures in the realms of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass, knowledge is not simply treated as object of possession, the ownership of which does not come without a fight or competition. Take, for instance, Alice's encounters with the Mad

Tea-Party members in *Wonderland* and with the Red and White Queens in *Through the Looking-Glass*. But there is more to knowledge that is at work in the *Alice* books. Knowledge functions as the *objet petit a*—the cause of Alice’s and the creatures’ desires—for communication and interaction with one another, irrespective of how effective they are. The relationship between the two parties (Alice and the creatures) is founded and operates on knowledge as *l’objet petit a*. Knowledge functions as that which causes the relation between self and other to happen and exist. In other words, Alice’s engagement with the creatures is no mere lunch, dinner, or picnic engagement. It is that which revolves around knowledge as *cause*. Had there been no such cause, Alice would have existed from the beginning to the end of her sojourns in the realms of *Wonderland* and the *Looking-Glass* as an invisible and tangential nonentity to those self-reliant worlds and their inhabitants. For instance, just when Alice is sure and thinking to herself that the live chess pieces “ca’n’t [sic] see me. I feel somehow as if I was getting invisible—,” knowledge as cause saves her existence from dwindling into nothingness; her desire to know “what happens next” to one of the White Pawns rolling and kicking on the table causes her to interact and intervene with the world of the *Looking-Glass*. Vice versa. The Garden of Live Flowers would have been no different from any garden of flowers existing in the symbolic order, and Alice would have uneventfully walked past it as she often does in her symbolic world, had knowledge not worked as cause for dialogic imagination to take place. Had there been no such cause, the *Alice* books would have been aborted. Had there been no such cause, the relation between readers and texts on the whole would have been annulled. Whole Knowledge is that which is lacking, hence curiosity and the desire to know. If the lack is not lacking, there can be no genesis of plot for the *Alice* books, or, the human tale on the whole. It is knowledge as hole awaiting (ful)fillment in the *Alice* books that causes the books to take shape and assume narrative life.

As Carroll shows, knowledge as objet petit a causes not only desire but also anxiety. The plot that operates on and revolves around knowledge as such entails anxiety as its quintessential *affect*. Plot as such elicits our desire to know yet at the same time provokes our desire *not to know*, such as experienced by Alice. Such plot (as that of Henry James' *The Wings of the Dove*, for another instance) draws its magnetic powers and energetics from the seesawing struggle of human desire split as such. Perhaps the latter still overpowers the former, for Alice's adventures in both books end with a rather determined desire not to know.

In both narrative ends, Alice determines not to know what is going to happen (to her) next, for how could the end be "happy" if to know is to experience hole in human subjectivity rather than whole again? Scholars have never tired of drawing Carrollean parodies out of the *Alice* books. Yet the greatest Carrollean ironies have escaped the critical eye: the irony of knowledge as cause and that of the two-fold human desire in relation to (acquisition of) knowledge. Despite an evocation of all the laughs and satiric comedies, the *Alice* books pose grave questions: how far are we (as is Alice) ready to go with our desire to know? How much can we afford to know, driven by desire as such, which will eventually split itself, along with its human subject, into two? Knowledge as cause of desire has led Oedipus to poke out his own eyes, King Lear to break his old heart, Kate McCoy to have nothing to be taken with her when she walks out of Densher Merton's door, and Alice to wake herself from her nightmares. Are we really free to desire the freedom to desire—to know, in this case? What is the price if we grant ourselves pursuits of this freedom? When or if unchallenged, human subjects functioning in the Master's and the University's discourses can continue to remain, shall I say, illusorily "safe" because knowledge is pursued and obtained in these discourses either as object of desire or as surplus value-jouissance. It is when knowledge functions

as cause of desire that the human subject is faced with and has thus to be prepared for black holes and irrevocable splits. After all, Henry James says it well and says it all in *The Golden Bowl*: “Knowledge, knowledge, [is] a fascination as well as a fear.” So is the desire to know.

Chapter Four: There Is No Such Thing as a “Happy Ending”

What one finds a paradise, another sees a hell. One’s happy ending can be another’s tragic end, and the qualifiers “happy” and “tragic” have long ceased to sufficiently or definitively qualify the emotionality a narrative ending evokes in its readers or bespeaks of the fates of its characters. We need recall here only the double-edged ending of Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1916), for instance. Whatever the cause that leads to the end of his verminous existence (be it the lack of family love and care, or a self-will to death, or both), Gregor Samsa’s end is irreversibly tragic on his part yet happily liberating (a literally “good riddance”) on the part of the remaining family members. Such a narrative end reveals the pain of one character yet meanwhile the others’ pleasure.

There is thus no such thing as a “happy ending.” Such a term bespeaks au fond an exegesis, an interpretative perspective, and, above all else, an emotive demand. Moreover, with the shaping powers of the dialogic imagination of modernism and those of humankind’s changed *Weltanschauungen* (world views), the term “happy ending” has come to signal for us in modern and postmodern times more an antiquated literary genre (say, “fairy tales”), a class (and very often unhappily believed to be the popular/mass) taste, or a pre-modern epochal sentiment (even sentimentality) than anything that can be “sophisticated” or “serious” enough to be considered un-nostalgically “realistic” or intellectually convincing and appealing. So appears the desire for “happy endings.” Desire as such is psychological. Perchance at best, there can only be those narrative texts that embrace “closure” and those that escape closure when we now come to speak of

narrative ends, albeit each of these two modalities has been subject to much discussion among and problematization by narratologists themselves.¹¹¹

What kind of narrative end have we arrived at, having experienced epochs of an experimental ebullience of modern- and postmodernism? Have we come to the dead end of narrative plotting and, above everything else, that of *how story ends*? It happens that, when we move into modern and postmodern times, along with the onset of modern emplotment and literary criticism (e.g., Henry James, E. M. Foster, etc.), the hero and heroine, for instance, do not always unite in marriage with wedding bells pealing complacently at the back of the reader's head or in death which ends all and resolves the rest. The hero or heroine no longer finds treasure and reaches home happily or contently at the end of an eventful journey. Battles are not necessarily won and glorified. Meaning may remain loosely afloat throughout the course of a (modern or postmodern) narrative and chafe against the reader's nerves (and we all have somehow learned to survive and live with the deconstructionist's architectonics of the universe). After all these evolutions and devolutions of human thought and experience, where can narratives be leading us? To what end? An end that heads toward more order and hope or more transgression and dystopic chaos? Which still triumphs at humanity's narrative ends after all the literary

¹¹¹ They may, in other words, be the so-called "open" vis-à-vis "closed" narrative endings, the notions of both of which have been subject to much contestation. Marianna Torgovnick, for instance, points out that "the Modernist bias of critics like [Alan] Friedman has virtually destroyed the usefulness of the terms 'open' and 'closed' to describe endings, by making 'open' a term of approbation, and 'closed' a term linked with unadventurous and narrow didacticism" (*Closure in the Novel* 9-10). Torgovnick further states (and I find myself quite in agreement with her criticism as quoted here): "After being praised for many years, the 'open' ending has recently come under critical attack and, insofar as it has become 'merely conventional,' rightly so. In a sense, from the beginning of its use, the term 'open' ending was an unfortunate one. Every novel, including an 'open' one, establishes by its ending a 'closed' network of internal relationships. And even endings that produce a feeling of finality, as most endings involving a shift in time scale do, may be relatively 'open' or relatively 'closed' when compared to similar endings. [...]. Moreover, application of the terms 'open' and 'closed' can sometimes be very much a matter of interpretation, as it is in *War and Peace*. As I have interpreted them, novels like *Light in August* and *The Waves* should be considered 'closed,' although a critic like Friedman would probably wish to call them 'open' " (Ibid. 207-08).

experiments concomitant with historical vicissitudes—Eros or Thanatos? Should we turn to science and technology for answers instead now that we have advanced into a cyberculture and a digital era, together with a “digital” understanding of our times? How can technology be of service to narrative (narration, narrativity, emplotment), and vice versa? Can it help us grasp narrative meaning and map out a new end at the next level of human experience? Finally, have we exhausted our conceptual frameworks and discursive vocabulary—“happy,” “tragic,” “open,” “close,” “structural finitude,” “incompleteness,” “closure,” “anti-closure,” “resolution,” and “irresolution”—with which we understand and discourse about narrative endings; with which we use to consolidate or determine the overall design and meaning of narratives? What is the term we could use to discuss those endings that manifest an admixture of pleasure and pain such as in a good many of Edgar Allan Poe’s grotesque stories? What about the desire for closure, even anti-closure, on the part of the author or the reader or both? I may not be able to answer, even address, all the questions raised above within the scope of this current project. Notwithstanding, with these questions on the horizon, I would like to navigate my readers, for now, back to an extant and relevant narratological discussion of narrative ending, with the notion of closure to begin with.

[1]

An Overview of Studies on Narrative Endings

Being the concluding and supposedly conclusive part of a given narrative structure, narrative ending by no means guarantees closure, and, as David H. Richter argues in his book *Fable’s End* (1974), even the condition of “completeness” apropos of narrative action or experience does not necessarily comprise and cannot on all occasions be equated with “closure.” In fact, as Richter observes, some writers may sacrifice “the most effective closure to the greatest sense of completeness in such a way that the works

are the better for it,” while others may go in the opposite direction of “sacrific[ing] completeness to closure” (170-71).¹¹² In her book *Closure in the Novel* (1981), Marianna Torgovnick further proposes a counterintuitive oxymoronic term—“incomplete closure”: according to Torgovnick, “[i]ncomplete closure may result from deliberate authorial choices, or it may result from an inadvertent formal failure, or from some combination of the two. It is quite different from endings that do what students are told never to do at the conclusion of an expository essay—endings that begin a new topic” (13). What Torgovnick terms as “incomplete closure” would echo in Julia Kristeva’s notion of “structural finitude.”

Albeit never a narratologist herself and not much a fan of contemporary narrative studies,¹¹³ Kristeva has written on and theorized about the structure and (semiotic) practice of the novel. Continuing Bakhtin’s line of argument of the novel as being dialogic and polyphonic, Kristeva makes her own claim in the essay “The Bounded Text” (1969): “The *novel*, seen as a text, is a semiotic practice in which the synthesized patterns of several utterances can be read” [*Italics original*] (37). The novel, being a practice of

¹¹² The literary examples provided by Richter are: Dr. Samuel Johnson’s philosophical novella-apologue *Rasselas* (1759) and Albert Camus’ *The Stranger* (1942) for the first case where closure is sacrificed (for the better) to a satisfying sense of completeness, and Oliver Goldsmith’s “flawed masterpiece” *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) for the second case where completeness is sacrificed (for the worse) to a rash authorial attempt at quick(ened) closure. In the latter case, as Richter remarks, “[s]uch a novel might well appear to have been finished too quickly by the author who had inadvertently written himself into a corner” (*Fable’s End* 171). For more thorough discussions of these literary examples in relation to closure vis-à-vis completeness, see David H. Richter’s book *Fable’s End* (1974).

¹¹³ In her article “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” (1969), Kristeva praises and elaborates Bakhtin’s attention to “the status of the word” in the novel. She also briefly discusses the value of contemporary narrative studies and gives a piece of her judgment: “Contemporary analysis of narrative structure has been refined to the point where it can delineate functions (cardinal or catalytic), and indices (as such or as information); it can describe the elaboration of a narrative according to particular logical or rhetorical patterns. Without gainsaying the undisputed value of this kind of research, one might wonder whether the presuppositions of a metalanguage that sets up hierarchies or is heterogeneous to narrative do not weigh too heavily upon such studies. Perhaps Bakhtin’s naïve procedure, centered on the word and its unlimited ability to generate dialogue (commentary of a quotation) is both simpler and more productive” (*Desire in Language* 88).

cultural productivity and a literary event as Kristeva remarks, entails the notion of what she calls *boundedness* “with its initial programming, its arbitrary ending, its dyadic figuration, its deviations and their concatenation” (38). A novel like *Jehan de Saintré* (1453) by French writer Antoine de La Sale, in Kristeva’s view, “can be considered finished as soon as there is completion of one of the loops (resolution of one of the oppositional dyads) the series of which was opened by the initial programming. [...]. I shall call this completion of the narrative by a concrete loop a reworking of the structural finitude” (55-56). Seen in this light, that which concerns, constitutes, and determines completion of narrative ending is a structuralist approach and resort to the idea and practice of “structural finitude.” As long as a narrative text resolves the loop of dyadic opposition, its structure reaches finitude (which is determined as well by consideration of the genre a narrative text befits)¹¹⁴; again to quote Kristeva herself, “[t]he narrative’s conclusion coincides with the conclusion of one loop’s trajectory” (57). Kristeva does not exclude the possibility that such criteria could end in *arbitrary completion* of the text of the novel and add to the sense of textual *arbitrariness* or *literariness* (59). According to Kristeva, the novel contains the elements and dimensions both of *the phonetic* (“referential utterance, narration”) and *the written* (“textual premises, citation”). Thus, narration as speech can never be completed or reach (en)closure, whereas *the written*, being structurally bounded, is able to strive toward a sort of finitude as closure.

Kristeva’s structuralist emphasis on “structural finitude,” however, does not explain the desire for closure, even anti-closure, on the part of the author or the reader or both. The currency and desire of “closure” or “anti-closure” cannot demise, however

¹¹⁴ Such “structural finitude,” according to Kristeva, is *genre-bound* as well. Kristeva writes, “[t]he notion of literature coincides with the notion of the novel, as much on account of chronological origins as of structural bounding. Explicit completion is often lacking, ambiguous, or assumed in the text of the novel. This incompleteness nevertheless underlies the text’s structural finitude. Every genre having its own particular structural finitude, I shall try to isolate that of *Jehan de Saintré*” (55).

structurally finite a narrative text (particularly the dimension of *the written*) is and can be. I want to come back to this notion of “incompleteness” with regard to narrative endings and first point out that “incomplete” narrative ends, or those that escape or altogether refuse closure by *not* achieving “completeness,” may invaluablely bespeak the one psychological truth which Lacan reiterated with emphasis and I here employ to rethink narratives in general: *there is no closure as far as human desire is concerned*. Human desire, being ever itinerant and metonymic by nature, can only be satisfied *metonymically* and hence remains, in a strict sense, *in-complete-able* and *un-close-able*. Insofar as narrative accords with this psychological truth of the human condition, there is and can be no perfect or perfectly happy ending, and the notion of narrative closure itself, together with the aesthetically gratifying and emotively euphoric feeling it can inherently engender, would continue to beg further examination in this context.

Therefore, by closure, I do not simply mean, in H. Porter Abbott’s words, that “[w]hen a narrative ends in such a way as to satisfy the expectations and answer the questions that it has raised, it is said to close, or to have closure” (188); or, in Barbara H. Smith’s terms according to her seminal study of poetic closure:

Closure occurs when the concluding portion of a poem creates in the reader a sense of appropriate cessation. It announces and justifies the absence of further development; it reinforces the feeling of finality, completion, and composure which we value in all works of art; and it gives ultimate unity and coherence to the reader’s experience of the poem by providing a point from which all the preceding elements may be viewed comprehensively and their relations grasped as part of a significant design. (36)¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Barbara Herrnstein Smith’s study of *Poetic Closure* (1968) quite exhaustively surveys poetic genres and examines poetic closure within these genres. Smith suggests that closure is one element that distinguishes poetry from prose fiction. Closure in poems of a sequential structure,

Nor do I follow Peter Brooks' interpretation that, upon discharging its erotics and energetics, a narrative comes to its rightful "death," "quiescence," "nonnarratability," or "lucid repose" (107). The characteristically un-restful, un-peaceful endings of many Edgar Allan Poe's stories readily come to mind as those that refuse to easily reflect Brooks' terms, and, besides Poe's stories, I will name only a few other similar examples here: the end of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) invitingly beckons her reader to expect further narratability of the heroine Lucy Snowe's plot, especially where M. Paul Emanuel is concerned. The end of Kafka's posthumous novel *The Castle* (1926) remains unresolved and "undead," leaving the very last sentence a literal "half-said."¹¹⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Gambler* (1866), for another instance, certainly does not come to any "lucid repose," let alone imprinting a happy and closural repose on the mind of the reader. Its narrative *and narrator* even desire to refuse "quiescence" at the end; instead of "nonnarratability," Alexei Ivanovich's self-narration (his interior monologue) seems to

as Smith analyzes, "is the complex product of the interaction between logical sequence and figurative language" (135). That is, poetic closure calls for an "interaction" between a poem's *formal* and *thematic* principles (*formal elements* being "the physical nature of words" that would feature "rhyme, alliteration, and syllabic meter" and *thematic elements* being "the symbolic or conventional nature of words" that would "include everything from reference to syntax to tone") (6). Again, in poems of a sequential structure, closure can be achieved when themes (such as seasonal and human life progressions) as well as formal elements (such as rhyme schemes and assonances) progressively and logically develop, repeat, meanwhile build up the reader's "desire for closure," and then satisfactorily "conclude" in final stanzas ("desire for closure" and "conclusion" are two key issues discussed in her book). While focusing on her study of poetic structures, Smith occasionally discusses the workings of fiction. She observes, for instance, that, in general, writers wish that "we have no further expectations at the end of the play, novel, or poem, no 'loose ends' to be accounted for, no promises that go begging. The novelist or playwright is likely to end his work at a point when either nothing could follow (as when the hero dies) or everything that could follow is predictable (as when the hero and heroine get married). The poet ends his work at some comparable point of stability, but unless (as sometimes happens) the poem follows a temporal sequence, this point will not be something we could call 'the end of the story'" (35). Although Smith's tangential discussion of fictional closure has been much commented upon (and found fault with) by critics whose interest and concern fall on fiction more than on anything else, let us not forget that Smith's project is in the main a project of poetics and it does indirectly open up a way in which fictional closure can be studied in like manner.

¹¹⁶ The end of *The Castle* leaves land surveyor K. in the castle's local official Gerstäcker's cottage with the official's mother. The last sentences of the novel flow on without an end stop as follows: "She held out her trembling hand to K. and had him sit down beside her, she spoke with great difficulty, it was difficult to understand her, but what she said" (316).

be able to stir to life and make another turn of the screw, had the narrative been allowed to continue for one more sentence, paragraph, or page.

The above-mentioned texts number only a selected few of those narratives whose ends defy a happily resolved, serenely closural ending as Brooks has envisioned. In view of the historical evolution of the novel, the (novelistic) tendency for “anti-closure” has become one defining signature of modernism and postmodernism as many critics (e.g., Smith, Richter, D. A. Miller) have observed and some (e.g., J. H. Miller, Richter, Torgovnick) have further problematized.¹¹⁷ The simplistically categorizing divide between traditional endings as closures with authorial affirmation (or conformity) and [post]modern endings as “anti-closures” with authorial defiance (or play) has fallen short. The “sense of an ending” (one of Frank Kermode’s book titles), closed or open, is perhaps, as critics like Marianna Torgovnick and Deborah H. Roberts argue, constructed

¹¹⁷ Barbara H. Smith observes that “[i]n much modern poetry and in modern poems otherwise quite dissimilar in style, one may readily observe an apparent tendency toward anti-closure. [...]. Moreover, anti-closure is a recognizable impulse in all contemporary art, and at its furthest reaches it reflects changing presumptions concerning the nature of art itself” (*Poetic Closure* 237-38). D. A. Miller, for another instance, comments on “the two basic requirements of traditional novelistic form: a moment of suspense and instability, and a moment of closure and resolved meaning. The first institutes the narratable disequilibrium, which the second converts back to a state of non-narratable quiescence” (*Narrative and Its Discontents* 109). In view of the reader and the “open/closed” choice of narrative ending a modern or postmodern reader is faced with, Don Fowler suggestively writes: “given a simple choice of being open or closed, it is difficult for a twentieth-century person to choose to be closed” (*Classical Closure* 5). However, like J. H. Miller, David H. Richter problematizes “the determinist notion that the ‘modern’ novel is ‘open-ended’ par excellence, while the older forms of the novel are typically closed” (*Fable’s End* 3). In the “Preface” of his book, Richter explains that “some of the works most commonly termed open-ended (like *To the Lighthouse* and *Herzog*) seem complete to me, not only in the trivial sense of having a final page with ‘The End’ obligingly inscribed upon it, but in the sense of recounting a completed process of change, either in external circumstances or in internal consciousness, taking place in the protagonists” (Ibid. vii). Richter further argues that “even the most modern novels—modern in terms of their technical innovations—are similar to the old-fashioned variety in that both types usually come to an end in aesthetically satisfying ways” (Ibid. 4). Thus, according to Richter, many so-called open-ended modern novels may convey a sense of resolution and completeness, much more so than their “traditional” predecessors (like *Pamela*) that would embrace and continue a narrative life past “The End.” For Richter’s discussion of “open/closed” narrative endings serving as a problematic divide between “modern” and “traditional” novels, see, for instance, his first chapter “Open Form and the Fable” (*Fable’s End* 1-21). For his discussion of Samuel Richardson’s novel *Pamela* (1740) as an example of “traditional” novels that defy an oversimplistic divide as such, see, in particular, *Fable’s End* 3-4.

on the site of *the reader*—the site of *the reader's* reading experience and cognitive processing of narrative meaning which is retrospectively conceived, negotiated, and translated as a whole.¹¹⁸ Therefore, contrary to the famous claim of Walter Benjamin that “[i]n the appreciation of a work of art of an art form, consideration of the receiver never proves fruitful. [...]. No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener” (69), Deborah H. Roberts, for one, stresses “the reader’s role in constructing the ending beyond the ending” (*Classical Closure* 269): simply put, “narratability” does not necessarily turn into “nonnarratability” at narrative ends. As Roberts suggests, the life of narrative “aftermath” lies rather in the power of the reader’s imagination derived from intertextuality. She cites *The Odyssey* as an example: even when the narrative of this Homeric epic poem gives an impression of closure, the life of the narratable continues on in the mind of the informed reader, for, as Roberts reminds us, “[a]ccording to the prophecy given to Odysseus by Tiresias in the underworld (11.121-37) and repeated by Odysseus to Penelope (23.267-84), he will set out on his travels once more, wandering far inland to sacrifice to Poseidon, and will eventually meet with a gentle death from the sea, in his old age, surrounded by a prosperous people” (Ibid. 252). Hence, again, the notion of closure as death, finitude, or quiescence of the narratable becomes questionably insufficient and even untenable, whether the narrative text be considered as classical, traditional, or (post)modern.

¹¹⁸ Marianna Torgovnick, for instance, believes that “we value endings because the retrospective patterning used to make sense of texts corresponds to one process used to make sense of life: the process of looking back over events and interpreting them in light of ‘how things turned out.’ Ordinary readers and literary critics share an interest in endings because appreciating endings is one way of evaluating and organizing personal experience” (*Closure in the Novel* 5). See the “Introduction” of Torgovnick’s book for her set of terms in describing “the relationship between author and reader during closure” (Ibid. 16-9). Peter Brooks has argued along the same line, though not particularly about the role of the reader in the meaning-construction of narrative ends, but about the relationship between narrative endings and narrative meanings on the whole: “[i]f the motor of narrative is desire, totalizing, building ever-larger units of meaning, the ultimate determinants of meaning lie *at the end*, and narrative desire is ultimately, inexorably, desire *for the end*” [Emphasis original] (*Reading for the Plot* 52).

In truth, closure is as much about *disclosure* (of secret and scandal as in the sensation novel¹¹⁹ or of the mystery of “whodunit” as in mystery, crime, or detective fiction) as about *enclosure*. While closure as *disclosure* is of paramount importance to suspense, crime, or detective fiction since the disrupted social order needs be brought to restored justice and new equilibrium, narratives that escape or refuse closure are narratives that evade or reject enclosure, or, in another word, containment. D. A. Miller observes that closure often amounts to a narrative device of “social control” as well as containment of transgressive (thus less “narratable”) desire. He exemplifies that, as a closural point in Jane Austen’s narrative of *Emma* (1816), Emma Woodhouse’s final choice of a marriage to George Knightley enables the heroine to grow out of a narcissistic love and form a healthier object-cathexed love with the right man. When it comes to Dr. Tertius Lydgate in George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871), Miller writes, “[t]o ride the outlaw out of town is virtually the only form of closure that so naïve a community/narrative can imagine” (*Narrative and Its Discontents* 117). Indeed, we can think of the ending of another Dostoevsky’s novel, *The Double* (1846), for one more instance of closure as (social) enclosure/containment: the narrative closes the moment when its hallucinatory hero, Mr. Goliadkin, Sr., a public “threat” to the Petersburg community, is enclosed and safely contained in a state asylum. At the narrative end we hear the doctor pronouncing to the social outcast, “ ‘You will haf a goferment apartment, mit firewood, mit licht, und mit serfices, vich you don’t deserf,’ Krestyan Ivanovich’s reply came sternly and terribly, like a verdict” (170). Again, in D. A. Miller’s words, “[t]he closural world seems less like the absence of the narratable than its strategic denial or expedient repression” (267).

¹¹⁹ In addition to the mainstream Eliot-Dickens works of what F. R. Leavis termed as the *Great Tradition*, sensation novels dominated the British literary scene in the 1860s as the market demand for novelistic production expanded. Sensation novels, such as the two classics of Wilkie Collins’ *The Woman in White* (1860) and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862), pivot and organize their plots on the three s-words and motifs: secret, scandal, and sensation within the domestic domain of the Victorian household. For more discussion of the phenomenon of the sensation novel, consult, for instance, Lyn Pykett’s seminal study *The “Improper” Feminine: The Women’s Sensation Novels and the New Woman Writing* (1992).

Now, Lacan tells us (though he may not have used precisely the terms I am using here) that the human subject is not only defined and anchored but also *enclosed* in the symbolic order constitutive of language and law. In Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic terms, closure as enclosure would signify castration: only when castration is accepted and primal *jouissance* given up, the human subject can then move on and function within the bounds of the symbolic, without being fixated on the imaginary or the real and consequently developing a clinical structure (of psychosis, neurosis, or perversion).¹²⁰ In Jean Jacques Rousseau's socio-political terms, closure as enclosure would point to the social contract between the individual and society that tames the noble savage yet, in turn, grants the individual his or her social rights and ensuing civic freedom. When considered in any of these terms, the notion and device of socio-political as well as psychical closure indeed appears double-edged. And when we bring the socio-political and psychical implications of the term "closure" into and examine them within the narratological context, we can say that closure becomes enclosure at a given narrative end with some guarantee on the one hand and on the other certain forfeiture.

Closure as enclosure is both humanity's happiness and tragedy. Closure as enclosure is precisely that which *l'écriture féminine* of the 1970s, for instance, was rebelling against. Breaking out of [en]closure in a symbolic order dictated by and organized around *le Nom/Non du Père* at the levels of the word, sentence, narrative structure, and even linguistic signification foregrounded the 1970s' and 80s' enterprises of French feminists

¹²⁰ Primal *jouissance* knows of neither split nor prohibition and, as Bruce Fink elucidates, can be "autoerotic or alloerotic (involving another person such as the mother)" (*A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 66). Fink explains, for instance, the neurotic situation in which castration is accepted on partial and substitutive (metonymic) terms: "This loss of [primal] satisfaction or *jouissance*—which Lacan refers to as 'castration'—is *accepted* to some extent by neurotics. They may not seem to have had much of a choice in the matter, but their acceptance of it constitutes a *solution* to a problem presented by their parents, teachers, and other representatives of the social order: 'If I give up this satisfaction, I get to keep something else' " [Italics original] (Ibid.).

(e.g., Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous), as well as Anglo-American feminist narratologists (e.g., Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Susan Winnett, Nancy K. Miller, and Susan S. Lanser). Consequently, while, for Freud and Lacan, [en]closure in the symbolic entails the human subject's breakout from his/her paralyzing fixation(s) by way of repositioning him-/herself in a relatively more "functionable" social world, [en]closure in the patriarchal order poses an indomitable threat, if not *the* threat, to the female speaking/writing/social subject for feminists who questioned, in the first place, the structure and structuration of that order. Whatever the approach or theoretical orientation, namely closure or anti-closure in narrative or linguistic construction or in the reconstruction of a social reality, the motives of psychoanalytic, Marxist, gender- and culture-studies theorists and narratologists all boil down and point to a humanitarian concern for humankind's pursuit of freedom. Narrative and narrativity, in this case, supply us with significant ways in which we negotiate a more desirable narrative and social reality as well as our only-too-human desire for the freedom to desire. Unfortunately, there is no "golden bowl," at least not one without a crack somewhere, when it comes to human existence and narrative ends. We find, for instance, that Swift's Gulliver is as miserably eager to escape (en)closure in the symbolic order of human existence (and "civilization"), as Dostoevsky's Mr. Goliadkin, Sr. would be too happy if he could be inscribed and enclosed in the symbolic (and in his case, with the affirming and embracing FOther, or, *le "Oui" du Père*). "Happy endings" may well be means of social control of the transgressive narratable, as D. A. Miller proposes. They may be programmed fictions within Fiction. Yet, what is even more significant is the fact that "happy endings" tell the efforts of *human* control on *human* existence, for, deep down, narrative closures and anti-closures all concern the one question *and* quest of freedom, and freedom, insofar as it being human, is existentially (de)limited.

The (de)limited nature of human freedom is precisely that which drives the energetics of narrative plot. The more (de)limited our freedom (to enjoy or desire) is, the more we transgress and, by way of transgression, pursue its de-confinement. D. A. Miller was right in asserting that “[t]he novel may be a game of *Fort!/Da!*, turning on the disappearance and return of a full meaning, but the game seems to have gone beyond this simple ground rule and begins to look like a symptom of the anxiety that its purpose was to master” (266). Anxiety is the affect of narrative and is that which narrativity feeds off. The *da* after *fort* in Freudian parlance or *tock* after *tick* in Frank Kermode’s terms at narrative ends may well supply the reader with a gratifying sense of an ending, but, as Lacan illumines in his Anxiety seminar (not yet published), the return of the Other or the return to the Other brings on anxiety of another dimension—the anxiety of an ever-present [en]closure. The truth lies in that the *da* or *tock* can hardly satisfy us; it invites more *fort*-movement or *ticks* to come, as [en]closure evokes anti-closure in the historical development of the novel (or, more generally speaking, narrative). Thus, to say the least, New Woman writings of the fin-de-siècle reopen the closural ends found in Jane Austen’s and George Eliot’s novels. Postcolonial texts break out of colonial enclosure, while African and Asian American works problematize and complicate the white Dick-and-Jane cultural master narrative. “Happy” closural endings of a Hegalian synthesis are fraught with immanent anxiety. If, for any reason, I do not speak of “happy endings” and claim that there is no such thing, it is by no means because this run-down term itself has fallen out of favor (or vogue) with literary critics and modern “sophisticated” readers. It is for the truth about human desire, as Lacan speaks and discourses about it. Hence, I court neither the common nor literary parlance of “comic” or “tragic” when I speak of narrative ends (note: I am *not* referring to “comedy” or “tragedy” as literary genre here). When it comes to the affective aesthetics of narratives, including that of their endings, I speak the word *jouissance*.

[II]

Jouissance(s) and Narrative Ends

Jouissance has everything to do with limits and boundaries; it transgresses them. Lacan notes in his *Ethics* seminar that “[t]he paradox of *jouissance* introduces its problematic into that dialectic of happiness” [Italics original] (192). The word *jouissance* is understood by Lacan himself and his followers *not* as unequivocal or non-ambivalent enjoyment. Jouissance does not equal happiness. Rather, jouissance can only be fully apprehended via its relation to pleasure, pain, and transgression of law.¹²¹ Jouissance recognizes no bounds within which the pleasure principle functions and dictates “enjoy as little as possible” in order to safeguard a comfortable psychical state of homeostasis against Unlust (unpleasure). Lacan poignantly observes, “it is evident that the first formulation of the pleasure principle as an unpleasure principle, or least-suffering principle, naturally embodies a beyond, but that it is, in effect, calculated to keep us on this side of it rather than beyond it” (*Ethics* 185). Fortunately (and unfortunately), the human subject does not always stay within wholesome bounds: the more there is forbiddance, the more transgression and resulting jouissance of transgression as such. Going off the “safe” limits of the pleasure principle is going *beyond* it, and, *beyond* the pleasure principle, enjoyment commingles pleasure and pain; hence, in jouissance, there is a constitutive element of pain, or, suffering.

Jouissance is, in essence, pleasure-in-pain. If the pleasure principle helps keep the human subject within non-excessive, moderate bounds of pleasure against unpleasure and thereby contributes to the establishment of the ethics of humanity, then “*jouissance*

¹²¹ Dylan Evans reminds us that “[e]ven when Lacan uses the word ‘pleasure’ on its own, he is always referring to the pleasure *principle*, and never to a sensation” [Italics original] (*An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* 148). For Evans’ illuminating introduction to the Lacanian notion of *jouissance*, vis-à-vis the Freudian notion of *pleasure* (as in “the pleasure principle”), consult pages 91-92, 148-49.

is evil. [...] it is suffering because it involves suffering for my neighbor” [Italics original] (*Ethics* 184). Lacan continues in the same seminar asserting that the command “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” for instance, exists *not* as an enhancement of the human subject’s pursuit of happiness *but* as a hindrance to such pursuit. Given “the unconscious aggression” and “the frightening core of the *destrudo*” (Ibid. 194), Lacan does not hesitate to pronounce that “to love one’s neighbor may be the cruelest of choices” (Ibid.). To deny or fail to recognize the transgressive, even shockingly *unethical* dimension of human nature in pursuit of *jouissance* is, according to Lacan, to “turn a deaf ear to talk of man’s innate tendencies to ‘evil, aggression, destruction, and thus also to cruelty’ ” (Ibid. 185). Notoriously using Marquis de Sade’s no less notorious *Philosophy in the Bedroom/La Philosophie Dans le Boudoir* (1795) as his illustrative text, Lacan further exemplifies the counterintuitive yet psychically unavoidable commingling of pleasure and pain, or suffering, in the complex nature of *jouissance*. The so-called human “happiness” and “pleasure” are, in fact, checked, inhibited, regulated, or further modified by both the Superego and the symbolic law and order, but *jouissance*, more true to human nature than symbolic pleasure or symbolized happiness, would enable the human subject to reap enjoyment by way of transgressing law (the law of the pleasure principle and even the symbolic human law) as well as the boundaries of pleasure and pain.

Twelve years later in his *Encore* seminar (1972-73), Lacan maps out the trajectory of what he terms as the *phallic jouissance* and the *jouissance of the Other* in view of and response to the 60s and 70s women’s liberation movement and the feminist enterprise. [Note: Lacan’s own formulation of what he termed as the Other took on many different denotations at the different stages of his teaching which spanned approximately forty years. The big Other could mean the Oedipal father or the primal father as in *Totem and*

Taboo, the analyst himself as perceived by the analysand, the locus of the symbolic order, the (internalized) Other in each one of us as in his formulated notion of *ex-timacy*, or, as in the *Encore* seminar, the other sex, i.e., the female sex. Here in the *Encore* seminar, Lacan speaks of the *jouissance* of the female sex as the *jouissance* of the Other. But then again, we should keep in mind that Lacan meant the *psychical*, not the biological, structure of the female.] In brief, the *phallic jouissance* is the enjoyment consisted of and contained within symbolic castration and (en)closure, and, in most cases, bespeaks the enjoyment of men, whereas the *jouissance of the Other* tells the enjoyment that eludes castration and (en)closure as such and bespeaks, in most cases, the enjoyment of women. It is not my primary business here to comment at great length on Lacan's defense concerning the man/woman position and respective *jouissance* underpinning his much sexuated thesis, which should have been yet has not been popularly understood within the context of *any* human subject's psychical structure and that of an analyst's clinical discourse, rather than readily perceived as a misogynist malicious conceptualization and reinforcement of biological determinism. It is also not my imminent concern here to engage in contemporary and later cross-continental feminist debates over or attacks on Lacan's thesis of the 70s.¹²²

For my purpose at present, I choose to follow the line of Lacan's discourse about the phallic *jouissance* and the *jouissance* of the Other and situate discourse as such within the narrative context *specifically with regard to jouissance as affect manifested in the overall exertions of plot orientations and, particularly, in the culminations of narrative ends*. That is to say and say it explicitly in avoidance of any critical misunderstanding, I do *not* adopt the language of the phallic *jouissance* and the *jouissance* of the Other for the sole purpose of further genderizing or theorizing about genderized writing acts and

¹²² Consult, for instance, Hélène Cixous' "The Laugh of Medusa" (1975) and Jane Gallop's *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction* (1982) for two among the most famously vocal feminist works that have leveled attacks on the above-mentioned Lacanian thesis pertaining to his *Encore* seminar.

texts as sexuated bodies—namely (and reductively), male writing ends in the phallic jouissance, while female writing manifests the jouissance of the Other at the narrative end. This could be a future possibility for anyone interested in the subject of narrative or the act of writing in relation to gender roles and Lacanian jouissances. In this project I am less concerned with the genderization of writing per se and more inclined toward discussing narratives as a whole.

Therefore, *in a broad sense*, I court Lacan's term of the phallic jouissance (or what I myself designate as the symbolic jouissance) in rethinking narratives that embrace closure or even aim at the enclosure of the human subject within the symbolic order and the term of the jouissance of the Other in discoursing about narratives that escape or refuse (en)closure, including those narratives that do not seem or wish to end. In this sense, the phallic (or symbolic) jouissance as a given narrative's end-jouissance suggests or manifests not only the pleasure/Lust of the dominant or subjugating party/locus of the symbolic order but also that of the "successfully" castrated or enclosed human subject, accompanied by the latter's pain or Unlust of being castrated or enclosed. As argued earlier, closure as enclosure in Freud's, Lacan's, as well as in Rousseau's terms—that is, on the psychological and social levels—signifies both the human subject's gain and loss (or forfeiture), pleasure and pain. On the other hand, those narratives (and human subjects to boot) that escape, elude, or refuse (en)closure inhabit the jouissance of the Other—i.e., the pleasure of denying the enclosing dominance of or castration by the symbolic order yet meanwhile the pain (sometimes even a pleasurable pain) of suffering no anchorage within that order, no rest, and perhaps instead an endless journey on the road in quest of meaning that remains uncertain, unfixed, and un-closeable. To a significant extent, the jouissance of the Other speaks to our postmodern enjoyment—of the postmodern human experience as such. This would be the affects of the Lacanian

notion of *jouissance* understood within the context of narrative, akin to that of the human condition. Now, in order to further disentangle myself from the overdetermining sexuated trappings of Lacan's 1970s discussion of *jouissance*, I propose here, *in conjunction with* the phallic *jouissance* and the *jouissance* of the Other, three other modes of *jouissance* in accordance with the three Lacanian orders of human psychic realities in service of rethinking, in a more comprehensive way, narrative affectivity (such as engendered Lust/pleasure and Unlust/unpleasure), together with narrative ends: they are the *jouissances* of *the real, the imaginary, and the symbolic*. Later I will explain and exemplify these *jouissances* in narrative contexts at greater length. I would like to add a proviso here before we move on: considering I do not wish to specifically genderize narrative texts hand in hand with the notion of *jouissance*, *I will venture an interchangeable use of the phallic jouissance and the jouissance of the symbolic when texts are not considered particularly or exclusively in gender-oriented (or gender-specific) contexts*. After all, both *jouissances* can be boiled down and pertain to the enjoyment of and within symbolic castration and [en]closure. Nevertheless, in the context of gendered or genderizing writing acts and textual bodies, the phallic *jouissance* may be used, with its original emphasis reinstated, other than the symbolic *jouissance* (given the former's initial sexuated connotations in Lacan's *Encore* seminar).

Two distinctive cases should be observed here: for *monologic* narratives (namely, those narratives that are directed forward and prevailed upon by one unchallenged discourse throughout), it is more likely that the given plot orientation bears fruit in the end to the mode of *jouissance* of the same order in mutual accordance and harmony. For instance, monologic narratives that are predominated by a *symbolic* plot orientation (dictated by either the discourse of the Master or that of the University) would accord a *symbolic (or phallic) jouissance* at the narrative end. Such would be the end-*jouissance*

of those narratives that aim for dominance and subjugation, for instance. Generally speaking, those narratives that aim at and eventually achieve dominance or subjugation, be they monologic or dialogic, culminate in the symbolic or phallic jouissance—the jouissance of castration, symbolization, and (en)closure. Such narratives enclose the human subject in the symbolic order of the subjugator and constitute the subject as a legitimized signifier within the dominant signifying chain of order and meaning. Such narratives end in closure as enclosure and feed on the pleasure-in-pain, namely jouissance, of the subjugated human subject. This pleasure-in-pain is understood within this context as the subject's pain at giving a part of himself away (or castrated) in exchange for the pleasure of being inculturated, anchored, and signified. In Lacanian psychoanalytic terms, the castrated subject is now able to move beyond the real—the state of oneness with the (m)Other—and take on *le Non/Nom du Père*, the “No!” and name of the (f)Other, together with his/her symbolized position and semiotic function within the symbolic plane of being, belonging, and meaning.

More interesting and challenging may be *dialogic* narratives, whose plots are directed forward by a dialectic of plot discourses. In this case, the discourse that “triumphs” in the end would be that which determines the mode of end-jouissance for the narrative. We can find such an example in Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740). The novel begins with the title heroine's desire to return to the Lacanian real; namely, the servant girl desires to return to her parents after her mistress passed away and to (re)experience a state of oneness of self and wholeness with the desired (f/m)Other. Her insistence upon a return to the real reveals a fear of symbolic castration, if not phallic penetration at the same time. (Remember the episode in which Pamela, while still a prisoner of Mr. B, imagines that she sees an omnipresent and omnipotent bull in the garden and is terrified by its penetrating gaze fixed upon her.) Her return to the real is forever delayed and

eventually becomes an impossibility, for, throughout the trajectory of the novel, her young master, Mr. B, functions in the Master's discourse against Pamela's discourse of the Hysteric (which, in her case, is supported by a desire for the real) and aims at conquering and subjugating her to his will. After much power struggle and dialectization of desire between master and servant in the narrative middle, the story ends in their marriage but, even more so, in Pamela's enclosure in the symbolic presided over by the master, finally her husband, as the locus of the symbolic order. Mr. B's discourse of the Master triumphs at the narrative end (this much we know), yet the significance of such a narrative ending that manifests not only Mr. B's *but also Pamela's symbolic jouissance* cannot be sufficiently comprehended through the existent narrative terms such as "a happy ending" or even "closure." With the Lacanian term *jouissance*, we can better apprehend the pleasure-in-pain that is embedded in such an ending: Pamela has to suffer the pain of being split from the real, her infantile girlhood, her non-separation from her parents, and, in turn, move on to the symbolic order (without fixation upon the real), gain pleasure in being castrated, and thereby grow into matured womanhood and wifehood. (Of course, the reader may very well read the *phallic* jouissance on the part of Mr. B as the end-jouissance of Richardson's novel, if the reader is inclined to considering the text along gender lines; that is, the text succeeds in validating the male enjoyment and male dominance over a young woman originally from an inferior social class. Yet, seeing in this light, *Pamela's enjoyment*—not only as woman's but, more importantly, as that of a human subject—will be less or even not at all accounted for.)

Understandably, not all narratives that end in closure as enclosure point to the symbolic (or phallic) jouissance. The determining denominator is indeed the Lacanian psychical order in which the narrative end is (en)closed. Those narratives that aim at and eventually achieve dominance or subjugation end in the symbolic (or phallic)

jouissance because the human (or narrative) subject is driven and oriented throughout the narrative middle toward becoming a subjugated signifier operating in (support of) the dominant Discourse of the Master or the University. Other narratives that deal with the human condition on the level of the Lacanian imaginary are also likely to end in closure as enclosure. Later in this chapter I will use Edgar Allan Poe's short stories (such as "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Cask of Amontillado," and the like) to argue that in these stories the narrator-protagonists see their "neighbors" as imaginary specular others who possess more power, more (self-)control, and more knowledge than themselves. It is hence intolerable for these protagonists that the "neighbors" should enjoy and not themselves. Such stories end in the heroes' dispossession and repossession of (the specular others') jouissance. Such narrative ends close with a pleasure-in-pain: the heroes gain ultimate satisfaction from vanquishing their specular others yet meanwhile suffer the pain of forever being enclosed in the imaginary state of being without ever being able to grow out of that imprisoning psychological state. As stated, there will be a much more detailed and enlarged discussion of the imaginary jouissance and Poe's narrative ends in the last section of this chapter.

Lastly, narratives such as George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and Shakespeare's *King Lear* close and culminate in the jouissance of the real. In both cases, (narrative) closure as enclosure take on a different meaning; again, the existent narrative terms such as "happy" or "tragic" endings or "closure" fall short of shedding light upon the significance of such narrative ends. Narratives as such end in what I designate as the jouissance of the real (or the real jouissance), referring to the Lacanian psychological order of the real, just as the symbolic jouissance refers to the Lacanian symbolic order and the imaginary jouissance to the imaginary order (hand in hand with the mirror stage). What I call the real jouissance is the primal jouissance in Lacanian theory: it points to the onset of the

human condition wherein there is no split in self, no separation between self and Other; it is a state of being whole with the Other. Both *King Lear* and *The Mill on the Floss* end in this wholeness regained: in death King Lear and his beloved daughter Cordelia, Maggie and Tom Tulliver can no longer be divided. (For more detailed discussion of *King Lear*, particularly Lear's desire for Cordelia as desire for the Lacanian real, see Chapter 3). Such narrative endings proffer both the characters and the reader a pleasure-in-pain: pleasure in the attainment of the real yet at the pain of death. Indeed, narrative endings as such manifest that the symbolic order allows no room for those who desire the impossible (for, according to Lacan, the real is the impossible). Union in death beyond the confines of the symbolic order may be the only way to re-claim the jouissance of the real. At such narrative ends, there is an exchange of jouissances—in both Lear's and Maggie's cases, a possible reinstatement in the symbolic order and obtainment of the symbolic jouissance are exchanged, with both pleasure and pain, for the jouissance of the real. As argued in Chapter 3, King Lear desires both kinship (his symbolized status as *the* locus of the symbolic order of his kingdom) *and* Cordelia as the ultimate desired Other. Had Lear's symbolic position been reinstated and Cordelia remained dead at the narrative end of the play, he would have had to give up his desire for wholeness with Cordelia and suffer the lack. Had both Lear and Cordelia been restored to life and the symbolic order (such were the earlier, pre-Shakespearean endings), there would still have remained a split between them (for instance, Cordelia would have had to be married off and thereby separated from the father). The way Shakespeare ended his version of King Lear testifies to the aforementioned exchange of narrative end-jouissances: a hole in the human subject's symbolic existence is exchanged for a *real* whole in death; the two ends of the human condition are mutually exclusive, and this is one human tragedy indeed. Similar with Eliot's heroine. There is no *real* place in the symbolic order (of St. Ogg's) for such a one as Maggie who cannot desire any

other man (neither Philip Wakem nor Stephen Guest) more than she desires Tom or their non-split state of being. Eliot has to kill off her heroine in order that the latter could finally attain her heart's *real* desire. The symbolic order—and the acquisition of symbolic jouissance—would demand that Maggie grow out of her “fixation” on the real, form a socially desirable object-cathexis (with a socially desirable man), and thereby complete her subject-formation which entails symbolic castration. This is, in fact, what Emma Woodhouse has gone through: Emma needs to learn (and has learned) to let go of appropriating the jouissance of the real by way of all the vicarious unions she has helped made and ultimately chooses to move on within the symbolic order (of Highbury) by marrying Mr. Knightley and experiencing, no more real or imaginary, but symbolic jouissance at the end of Austen's narrative.

Now, while a given narrative may be oriented to end in a particular and singular jouissance, there are, however, instances in which different modes of jouissance may coexist, just as the three orders of human psychological realities are not and should not be understood as mutually exclusive. Emily Brontë's classic *Wuthering Heights* (1847) epitomizes this narrative possibility for different modes of jouissance to coexist (and quite in harmony): the narrative ends, on the one hand, with Hareton Earnshaw's restored establishment in the symbolic order as master of his long dispossessed inheritance as well as his acquisition of literacy, i.e., his entrance to the symbolic signifying chain of meaning, thanks to Cathy's tutelage. In this sense, the Cathy-Hareton plot closes in the jouissance of the symbolic. On the other hand, the same narrative end sees Heathcliff's death as his ultimate return to and “reunion” with Catherine, his soul's other, hence the jouissance of the real—the jouissance of non-split wholeness. Such a narrative end makes the coexistence of jouissances possible and renders the term “happy ending” or “closure” indeed too poor and shallow.

Take, for another instance, the two *Alice* books I discussed in the previous chapter (and since I already discussed there and quite at length the *imaginary* plot orientation of the *Alice* narratives, I will now adhere to examining their narrative ends). Extant scholarly discussions and analyses of Carrollian characters and episodes have proven quite exhaustive, yet like-minded examinations of the endings of the *Alice* books seem still a lamentable lack. Both plots of the *Alice* books engage a dialectic of discourses and, at each narrative end, the heroine returns to the symbolic world and resumes her function as symbolized human subject. Yet, the difference of the two endings—the two dissimilar returns—mark one of the greatest distinctions of the two books. The end of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* tells first of Alice, upon waking, getting up and running off, “thinking while she ran, as well she might, what a wonderful dream it had been,” and then of her elder sister picturing herself in Alice’s place in the latter’s dream and finally envisioning Alice’s full-grown womanhood impregnated with childhood remembrance and tale-telling of “the happy summer days” (Gray, ed., 98-99). What is of particular and un-talked of significance of this ending is the plot’s culmination in a harmonious blend and unity of multi-layered *jouissance*—of the imaginary, the symbolic, and of the Other. Let me remind again that what I call *the imaginary jouissance* designates an enjoyment pertaining to the *imaginary* axis of the ego-other (in Lacanian topology, *a-a'*) relationship and to the attributes of the imaginary order in the main. The fact that the elder sister finds the loci of both knowledge (of Wonderland) and resulting enjoyment in Alice as (the elder sister’s) other and attempts at obtaining that same pleasure through identifying with Alice, i.e., dreaming Alice’s dream, and thereby appropriating Alice’s enjoyment bespeaks the imaginary *jouissance* that entails, as part and parcel of the imaginary order, the ego’s identification with an imaginary other (ideal or not). But regarding the end of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the imaginary *jouissance* is not all: embedded within the elder sister’s imaginary *jouissance*, there is an

anticipated symbolic *jouissance* to boot, for, in the sister's last vision, young Alice, like herself, would be able to grow up understandably within the confines of the symbolic order and continue on with her development into symbolic womanhood. Albeit within the confines of the symbolic, moments of freedom against confines as such could be relished by the instrumentality of language structured as narrative. As Carroll's concluding paragraph in the book illuminates, it would be the very act of *narrativity*—in which grown-up Alice relates the tale of Wonderland to “other little children”—that pries open a space within symbolic confinement, eludes dull enclosure as such, and proffers a *jouissance of the Other*, a *jouissance* that defies or eludes complete symbolic (en)closure. Narrativity would function as the agent that bridges the gap between the imaginary (ego-other) and the symbolic (narrator-audience) relationships, and translates imaginary *jouissance* into symbolic *jouissance*, and vice versa.

The ending of *Through the Looking-Glass* tells another tale: Alice can no longer easily shake off her impression of the world experienced within the Looking-Glass. The text ends with two questions and two question marks: “Which do *you* think it was?” “Life, what is it but a dream?” (Gray, ed., 208-09). The Alice who returns with a knowledge of the topsy-turvy world of the Looking-Glass reenters the symbolic order as anything but a unified and totalized human subject. This is *not* to say that Alice is and will remain a “traumatized” human subject in the symbolic. It is not a question (or my current concern) in point. What is significant is the fact that Alice, upon reentering the symbolic, brings with her being a *hole* in her knowledge about life and human existence in the symbolic. In other words, a gap in Alice's epistemological, even ontological apprehension of her position as human subject in the symbolic as well as the order itself has now been opened. Unlike the ending of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which rests with a mutually-compatible coexistence of multiple *jouissances*, the narrative end

of *Through the Looking-Glass* refuses to close with such a possibility. Rather, it is the single-handed predominance of the *jouissance of the Other*—with its heroine now remaining as a skeptical other of the symbolic, unmoored in the signifying chain of language and meaning—that the plot of the later *Alice* book achieves at the end. Language in this later *Alice* book can no longer function as a bridging and totalizing agent in the narrative end. Rather, it sustains and insists on the hole in the symbolic signifying chain. It reinforces, instead of mediating, the gap between the heroine's experiencing of the imaginary and the symbolic orders. This Alice's *jouissance* speaks to a pleasure-in-pain, a pleasure-in- suffering of eluding and resisting symbolic (en)closure with a hole.

The *Alice* books manifest the complexity of narrative logic, i.e., X plot orientation may not necessarily and easily result in X (end-)jouissance on account of the presence of a dialectic of discourses. Although both *Alice* narratives exert an overall imaginary plot orientation, Carroll does not confine his Alices in the imaginary realm with the Wonderland and Looking-Glass creatures for good. In the end (and in both narrative ends), Carroll desires his Alices to still return to the symbolic world and continue, with or without the heroines' inner perceptual and conceptual changes, functioning and growing as symbolic subjects. Yet, in like manner, this is not to be understood that Carroll eventually submits his Alices to symbolic (en)closure for good, given the *jouissances* I have named for each respective *Alice* narrative ending. Such endings as those of Carroll's *Alice* books with their resulting *jouissances* give accent to the author's true authorial intention—i.e., to have his Alices continue functioning in the symbolic order with a multiplicity of *jouissances*.

To briefly conclude here: narrative ends, along with the affectivity and aesthetics they bring forth, do not come out of nothing and should, generally speaking, never be discussed per se. Narratologists such as Frank Kermode and Peter Brooks make explicit that narrative endings are in some way and to certain extent already implied and even predetermined by their beginnings, while the former would retrospectively endow further sense and meaning upon the latter. I would like to argue more and drive home the idea that narrative ends are shaped and determined to a large degree by plot orientations (Chap. 3). It is, therefore, too simplistic and reductive a reading that a “happy” ending nails the tonality and affectivity of a “happy” story (or, in like manner, a “tragic” ending defines a “tragic” narrative). As earlier demonstrated, the terms “happy” and “tragic” in describing, even assessing, narrative ends can be really fuzzy and inadequate. Such a reading would further ignore the dilatory space of “the middle”—the “battleground” where discourses are fought out—which narrative utilizes to drive and strive (or orient) toward an end, especially a compromised end. Poetic “injustice” would take place when, for instance, a narrative ending does not accord the way in which narrative orients in the middle once the beginning kicks off. This notion of accordance addresses the significance of bringing plot orientations into consideration and discussion of narrative ends. Consequently, with my examination in the last chapter of plot orientations hand in hand with Lacan’s discourse theory in mind, it is only natural (and logical) that the mode of *jouissance* of any narrative end should follow and result from that given plot orientation which drives the narrative towards its end. In other words, my delving into narrative ends will not stand alone, but, instead, shall be accompanied by a consideration of plot orientations as shown in the following sections on the texts of Freud, Cixous, and Poe.

This chapter will now inquire more into the relationship—and intersection—among jouissance, plot orientation, and narrative/textual end in works, both theoretical and fictional, that either entail jouissance of a different terrain or have not yet been examined at length in this project. The first two of the following sections are devoted to reading Freud’s and Cixous’ theoretical texts as narratives that display plot exertions, narrative affects, and jouissances and the last to Poe’s arabesque and grotesque stories. Theoretical texts, like narrative fictions, need to reach some sort of “conclusions,” if the need is not greater indeed in the theoretical (con)text. I wish to use the section on Freud, in particular, to illustrate that a theoretical text may not “conclude”—either in terms of reaching structural “closure” or breaking out of “closure” as “enclosure”—as easily as one may think—at least not more easily than a fictional text does; that, even as Freud has attempted, breaking out of symbolic (en)closure does not guarantee a simple “happy ending.”

[III]

Freud and the Symbolic Jouissance

Symbolic jouissance entails first and foremost castration of the human subject in the symbolic order. Narrative ends that exude symbolic jouissance celebrate human castration and anchorage within such an order. In *Totem and Taboo* (1913) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1938) Freud lays out another no less bold thesis about man’s castration by some primal father and the correlation between mass neurosis and religion than that of the death drive put forth in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. It is a thesis that has been much dismissed as a hypothesis of certain mythical/anthropological construction on the writer’s part, in spite of Freud’s insistent claim for his genuinely scientific methodology. Leaving aside such scholarly suspicion or criticism, Freud’s thesis concerns the nature of symbolic jouissance in the first place; and, more

significantly to my project, Freud, in writing about jouissance as such from the perspective of religion, demonstrates a most intriguing authorial desire, particularly in the *Moses*, against religious jouissance as the jouissance of symbolic enclosure. Writing against the grain is never an easy task, and Freud's authorial desire to write against enclosure in the order of the symbolic FOther drapes his texts with anxiety as the predominating textual affect. His desire as such is that which motivates my own desire to write about these Freudian texts as narratives inherent with textual energetics, orientation, and affectivity. Writing against enclosure in the order of the FOther causes the text of the *Moses* to break open from occasion to occasion, hence a not so easily close-able textual end. This will be discussed in greater detail in the current section. First of all, how is symbolic jouissance understood within the Freudian narrative (con)texts?

Freud bases his research and thesis formulation largely on Charles Darwin, Scottish anthropologist James G. Frazer, English biblical scholar W. Robertson Smith, and English anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor.¹²³ According to Freud's (re)construction, human civilization begins, rather shockingly, with the murder of and "deferred obedience" to the primal father who, prior to his unnatural death, dominated the primal horde and enjoyed all the women (the latter point is elaborated on and emphasized more in Lacan's *Encore* seminar). The "myth" begins with the sons' usurpation of the strong and "violent" primal father, the return of guilt of murder, and the ensuing instatement of

¹²³ On the anthropological and other related research legacy which influenced Freud's own hypothesization, Peter Gay informs us that Freud had "derived the first impulse for his investigations from Wilhelm Wundt's 'nonanalytic' *Völkerpsychologie*, and from the psychoanalytic writings of the Zurich school, of Jung, Riklin, and the others. But he noted with some pride that while he had profited, he had also dissented from them both. He had drawn as well on James G. Frazer, that prolific encyclopedist of primitive and exotic religions; on the eminent English biblical scholar W. Robertson Smith, for his writings on the totem meal; and on the great Edward Burnett Tylor, for his evolutionary anthropology; to say nothing of Charles Darwin, for his picturesque surmises about the social condition of primitive man" (*Freud: A Life for Our Time* 327).

law and order epitomized by the taboos of killing the totem animal and of incest. The earlier practices of the totem meal (the killing and devouring of the totem animal), as Freud points out, signifies “a repetition and a commemoration of this memorable and criminal deed, which was the beginning of so many things—of social organization, of moral restrictions, and of religion” (*Totem and Taboo* 176). Hence, after the killing and devouring of the primal father, the instatement of the taboo against violating acts as such upon the totem animal functioning as “the surrogate father” in the name and form of totemism symbolizes “a kind of reconciliation” with the murdered and devoured primal father (Ibid. 179). Freud goes on to note that the violated dead father becomes even more powerful (and more loved) in the observance and memory of the totem taboo and totemic religion than the one who was living among the horde. From here Freud asserts on a global scale:

Totemic religion arose from the filial sense of guilt, in an attempt to ally that feeling and to appease the father by deferred obedience to him. All later religions are seen to be attempts at solving the same problem. They vary according to the methods which they adopt; but all have the same end in view and are reactions to the same great event with which civilization began and which, since it occurred, has not allowed mankind a moment’s rest. (*Totem and Taboo* 180)

In this light, religion ranging from that of totemism to Christianity supplies man with the *jouissance of the symbolic*, or, in Lacan’s own term, the *phallic jouissance*—with the pleasure-in-pain of man castrated by the Name-of-the-Father, alive or dead. In this light, *Totem and Taboo* offers us a genesis, albeit conjectured, of religion, human law, and order and, more, an explanation of the nature of the symbolic/phallic jouissance. For man to survive the original sin and guilt of the primal father’s murder, he needs be subjected to human law and castrated accordingly.

In *Moses and Monotheism* the jouissance of the symbolic is rendered even more pronounced. Freud explicates on the socio-religious phenomenon in which both Mosaic Judaism and Christianity originate from the murder of the primal father. At one point Freud alleges: “I have no qualms in saying that men have always known—in this particular way—that once upon a time they had a primeval father and killed him” (*Moses and Monotheism* 129). While the Judaic religion is premised upon the murder of Moses, Christianity is founded in like manner upon the murder of another great personage, Christ. In Freud’s own words, “[t]he murder of Moses was such a repetition and, later on, the supposed judicial murder of Christ, so that these events move into the foreground as causative agents. It seems as if the genesis of monotheism would not have been possible without these events” (Ibid. 129-30). Freud remarks that the practice of circumcision in observance of the Judaic religion exemplifies the Jews’ self-willed subjection to the Law-and Name-of-the-Father (for, as Freud observes, they could have forgone this practice); Freud states, “[c]ircumcision is the symbolical substitute of castration, a punishment which the primeval father dealt his sons long ago out of the fullness of his power; and whosoever accepted this symbol showed by so doing that he was ready to submit to the father’s will, although it was at the cost of a painful sacrifice” (Ibid. 156).

On the front of Christianity, Freud finds that the element of guilt deeply rooted in the notion of sacrifice rules as the omnipresent and omnipotent religious motif and, even more so, the neurotic symptom; disciples need to believe that Christ is killed and sacrificed for humanity so that with this conviction of Christ’s surrogate sacrifice comes the jouissance of spiritual cleansing, redemption, and salvation in everyman. Freud elucidates on the dimension of wish-fulfillment in Christianity: “A Son of God, innocent himself, had sacrificed himself, and had thereby taken over the guilt of the world. It had to be a Son, for the sin had been murder of the Father. [...]. If there was no such leader,

then Christ was the heir of an unfulfilled wish-phantasy; if there was such a leader, then Christ was his successor and his reincarnation” (Ibid. 110-11). To participate in the Eucharist is to embalm in the *jouissance* of the symbolic seen in this light, and, while “[t]he Mosaic religion had been a Father religion,” “Christianity became a Son religion” (Ibid. 111). Religious premises, ethics, and practices as such all come down to the human subject’s submission to “the will of the father.”

In order for the human subject to anchor and function in the symbolic and to engage in the symbolic *jouissance*, the superego needs to efficiently operate. It is the interference and operation of the superego that enables the ego to shake off the hardly irresistible and powerful influences wielded by the id and to successfully renounce instinctual demands for pleasure and satisfaction. Slavoj Žižek observes, “[s]uperego emerges where the Law—the public Law, the Law articulated in the public discourse—fails,” and, in distrusting the masking office of the superego, Žižek articulates, “[s]uperego is the obscene ‘nightly’ law that necessarily redoubles and accompanies, as its shadow, the ‘public’ Law” (*The Metastases of Enjoyment* 54). Where the “public Law” fails, the superego acts *by default* and decrees its law of enjoyment. The law of the superego well accords, supports, and sustains the “public Law,” including that of religion. Religion, as Freud pinpoints, thrives on the office and efficacy of the superego which directs the human subject away from immediate instinctual gratification towards intellectual development and ideational pursuits as venues of sublimation. Freud concludes by claiming that “[i]n instinctual renunciation thus appears to play a prominent part in religion” (*Moses and Monotheism* 152). Ethics, including religious ethics, “means restriction of instinctual gratification” (Ibid.) and, in Lacan’s argument laid out in his *Ethics* seminar, operates upon the pleasure principle against the obtainment of *jouissance* (namely, transgression of “restriction of instinctual gratification”). Thus, the

jouissance offered by religion with its ethics and practices, for instance, signifies the jouissance of the superego au fond. Granted that “[t]he Superego is the successor and representative of the parents (and educators) who superintended the actions of the individual in his first years of life; it perpetuates their functions almost without a change” (Ibid. 149), the jouissance of the superego proffered by the Name-of-the-Father (again, in the form of religion in this case) bespeaks the jouissance of the symbolic. Jouissance as such demands the human subject’s submission to the superego and to castration and, in return, brings about sublimated satisfaction and enjoyment within bounds of human ethics.

As the writing of *Moses and Monotheism* resonates, it is never an easy enterprise to challenge the authority and ideational rule of God (Mosaic or Christian) *qua* Father and attack the illusion of symbolic jouissance evoked by and partaking in His name. Freud’s text abounds in the questions of desire, freedom, and anxiety inherent in, say, narrative at large, and its textual energetics cannot help but unveil a persistent seesawing between the writer’s desire for freedom to desire (in other words, to write against the illusory essence of symbolic jouissance proffered by religion) and the affect of anxiety resulting from desiring such. Writing on the taboo of religion toward the end of his life while being ill and at the height of anti-Semitism during Nazi rule, Freud had the uttermost question of freedom in mind. It is known that in early June of 1938 Freud made his way to England in order to “die in freedom.” The publication history of *Moses and Monotheism* tells the fate of unorthodox writing met by “anxious appeals, angry denunciations, contemptuous refutations, and a scattering of applause” (Gay 632). Yet, the desire to write against the grain cannot be quelled and silenced, either. Gay records, “[o]n June 21, just two weeks after landing in England, he [Freud] noted in his *Chronik*, ‘Moses III started again.’ A week later, he told Arnold Zweig that he was working on the

third part of the *Moses* with pleasure. Apparently it was a pleasure that few others shared” (Ibid.). The repressed always returns and Freud could not simply dispense with his desire to write the *Moses*, thus opening the text over and over again. In Freud’s own words, “I decided to put it away, but it haunted me like an unlaidd ghost, and I compromised by publishing two parts of the book independently in the periodical *Imago*” (*Moses and Monotheism* 131-32). Hence, writing on the *Moses* concerns not only Freud’s religious “disobedience” but also, tellingly and significantly, the writer’s *acting-out* of his irrepressible desire on the one hand and on the other his anxiety about a potential lack of freedom to desire as such.

The affect of Freud’s textual anxiety always returns. Perhaps nowhere else in Freud’s writing is the presence of such anxiety more apparent and persistent than in *Moses and Monotheism*. Nowhere else in his writing is the need of self-explanation, self-rationalization, and self-defense made more pronounced. The textual unity of the *Moses* is seen to be compulsively broken off from time to time owing to the writer’s self-conscious need to justify his desire for *writing out*, a desire for desiring without lurking constraints or prohibition coming, for instance, from ever-present religious fathers or even from God as the ultimate F(O)ther Himself. As posited earlier in this project, it is the omnipresence of the Other which never lacks that gives cause to the affect of anxiety. Thus, at one point, we witness Freud breaking up the sequence and flow of his thesis by asserting, in its stead:

Now as then I am uneasy when confronted with my own work; I miss the consciousness of unity and intimacy that should exist between the author and his work. [...]. My uncertainty begins only at the point when I ask myself the question whether I have succeeded in proving this for the example of Jewish monotheism chosen here. (*Moses and Monotheism* 70-71)

At another point, the great psychoanalyst feels a need to interrupt the sequence and flow of his thesis again in order to apologize, though not without good reasons insofar as he himself is concerned, for “the disadvantage of extensive repetition” (Ibid. 132). As Freud himself tells us, repetition signals the return of and mastery over the repressed. Lacan further explains that “[w]hat necessitates repetition is *jouissance*”—“a search for *jouissance*” (*Seminar XVII* 45). Hence, for Freud to keep repeating with nuanced variations his thesis on the father-induced monotheism of the Judaic religion and Christianity is for him to keep desiring the freedom to desire against symbolic (en)closure and to struggle against anxiety caused by this implicitly omnipresent (F)Other lurking in the background of his writing. At the same time, this repetition of restating and reinstating his thesis into the textual body of the *Moses* not only, as above mentioned, breaks off the flow of the *Moses* plot but also yields a prolonged, if not repetitive, dilatory “middle” space. Indeed, this self-manifest need on the writer’s part tells more about the forces wielded by desire in tandem with anxiety which direct (Freud’s) textual affectivity and energetics than it does about writing on a difficult and provocative subject, period. In brief, it unveils Freud the writer’s search for *jouissance*. Desiring the freedom to desire against (en)closure is accompanied by affects such as anxiety. In writing and desiring through writing against symbolic religious enclosure, Freud is transgressing the laws not only of religious ethicality but of the pleasure principle to boot. The writing of the *Moses* hence becomes a pleasure-in-pain and orients toward the *jouissance of the Other* in Lacanian terms; it bespeaks an other mode of *jouissance* against symbolic religious castration and enclosure which could have offered Freud the psychoanalyst and writer of the *Moses* the symbolic/phallic *jouissance* under the aegis of the Law- and Name-of-the-Father in exchange. Freud refuses such an exchange. He has in his *writing/acting-out* experienced the *jouissance of the Other* that few others have comprehended. With the affective narrativity of his text (*Moses and*

Monotheism), Freud becomes the Other (as in the jouissance of the Other) that rejects complete symbolic (en)closure; he refuses to be assimilated into the religious (F)Other, into the locus of the symbolic religious order and chain of signification. Yet, in doing so, his textual narrativity includes constant sliding, circuiting, apologizing, yet meanwhile unabashedly deconstructing and determinedly veil-lifting.

Narratologically speaking, the text of the *Moses* itself exhibits a jouissance of the Other as anti-closure; Freud refuses to enclose his argument and textual “resolution” within the existing symbolic chain of signification and meaning. In truth, he bores a hole in the religious language of the symbolic FOther. Insofar as the *Moses* is concerned, one wonders if there is really such a thing as a “happy closure” in this specific text—one that is filled with section or chapter openings, endings, re-openings, and more attempted endings, let alone those frequently self-imposed interruptions in “the [narrative] middle” in view of the overall design of *Moses*’ “plot.” Indeed, in writing against religious enclosure in the ever presence of the powerful FOther, Freud remains incapable to settle his text, especially its end, in an all-too-easy textual closure and thus an effortless peaceful rest. He can find neither rest nor pleasure in a textual [en]closure in the language of the FOther. His textual pleasure exists de facto in the rejection of [en]closure as such. Nevertheless, this refusal to “close” or anchor the *Moses* in the FOther’s signifying chain of meaning yields great anxiety, if not a momentary sense of powerlessness as well. When Freud tried for the first time to “close” his text (e.g., the first two parts of the *Moses* as published in 1937), he admitted: “Such a continuation of my essay would link up with conclusions laid down twenty-five years ago in *Totem and Taboo*. But I hardly trust my powers any further” (*Moses and Monotheism* 65). When attempting at closing his text (i.e., the third part of the *Moses*) for the second time before March 1938, Freud writes with caution and a proviso, “[o]ne cannot, however,

reasonably demand or expect exhaustive answers of such enigmas. All that I can offer is a simple contribution, and one which should be appraised with due regard to the critical limitations I have already mentioned" (*Moses and Monotheism* 176). Such a textual end reads like that of a narrative that is "to be continued" once, say, more research findings come within reach. But more significantly, it engenders a transgressive pleasure in writing against enclosure in the (F)Other's language and ending. Religious jouissance is fairy tale material, so speak the *Moses*, *Totem and Taboo*, *The Future of an Illusion*, and *Civilization and Its Discontents*. The *Moses*, my prime example here, arrives at the other end of the conclusion concerning religious practice and jouissance and indeed proffers the reader with the jouissance of the Other. Yet, as Freud's multiple attempts at ending his *Moses* illustrate, jouissance as such bespeaks pleasure-in-pain in that to anchor one's meaning outside the existing symbolic order and language is an anxiety-provoking business. Pleasure may come only at the expense and with the pain of sacrificing a comfortable and restful (en)closure. This is to say that the narratological terms such as "closure" and "anti-closure" at narrative or other kinds of textual ends are much more complicated than they sound, for they may come into being fraught with affectivity. Freud's *Moses* does not and cannot reach an end without difficulty and much interruption, which in turn causes a prolonged and repetitive dilatory "middle" space. When it finally "concludes," such an "anti-closural" ending as that of the *Moses* does not guarantee an easy "happy ending." Anti-closure may result in anxiety as an inherent affect that cannot be easily resolved. My discussion will now segue into examining another theoretical text that also manifests attempts at breaking out of symbolic (in this particular case because of its overtly sexuated context, phallic) enclosure, hence yielding, in like manner, the jouissance of the Other that traverses, oscillates, and ends at the other side of the symbolic order.

[IV]

Hélène Cixous and the Jouissance of the Other

Algerian-born French feminist Hélène Cixous writes her seminal essay “Le Rire de la Medusa” (published in French in 1975 and translated into English in 1976) in a highly insurgent vein against the obnoxiously oppressive and repressive phallo(go)centrism she and other like-minded feminists found in the discourses and conceptual frameworks of western intellectual men such as Freud and Lacan. The paradox lies in that, while vehemently protesting against male-dominated discourse as such and championing for *écriture féminine* as a remedial way out, Cixous unwittingly answers Lacan’s call in his *Encore* seminar for new discursivity about the jouissance of the Other as feminine jouissance. Lacan explicitly expresses in *Encore* that he wishes to bring to his audience this point: “[that he] succeeds in making the sexual relationship fail (*faire rater*) in the male manner” (56). On top of this point Lacan proposes:

If there is some angle from which this business of the sexual relationship could be clarified, it’s precisely from the ladies’ side (*côté*), insofar as it is on the basis of the elaboration of the not-whole that one must break new ground. That is my true subject this year, behind *Encore*, and it is one of the meanings of my title. Perhaps I will manage, in this way, to bring out something new regarding feminine sexuality. (*Seminar XX 57*)

Apparently, and as a fact, Lacan fails to bring off this business he bears in mind especially in the eyes of his lady audience and readers. His notorious formulations that woman is *not-whole* (*pas-toute*) and that “woman doesn’t exist” (“*la femme n’existe pas*”) have enraged, rather than appease, a great many of Medusas in France and abroad (Cixous for one and Jane Gallop for another) and rendered their stony eyes even stonier!

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is not my ultimate concern here to come to Lacan's defense and make his language sound right again. But one thing should be made clear before I venture further: regarding his schema of sexuation in the *Encore* seminar, Lacan, very much like the Freud defended by Juliet Mitchell in her brave enterprise *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974), is *describing*, even to the advantage of unveiling, instead of *prescribing*, the situation of woman in western patriarchal society *as well as* her position in male fantasy. (Again, the terms "man," "woman," "male," and "female" ought to be comprehended here in the light of the human subject's psychical structuration, rather than that of biological determinism.) Vis-à-vis the psychical reality of man, the psychical reality of woman entails a kind of castration that is not *all/whole*. Woman, in other words, is not *all* or *wholly* castrated by the same fear of the primal father (by *le Nom/Non du Père*) as is her male counterpart and, accordingly, is not *all* or *wholly* enclosed within the symbolic order. Woman, in her own psychical structuration, has escaped complete (*toute*) symbolic (en)closure, and it is for this reason that Lacan feels the need and motivation in the first place for discoursing about and speaking *for* this other satisfaction within the female subject's position—a *jouissance* of the Other as feminine *jouissance*.

In regard to male fantasy, however lamentable, Lacan unveils with disturbing honesty that woman does not exist in male fantasy as all or wholly there. In the diagram he draws (*Encore* 78), that which takes the place of woman is *objet petit a*, meaning that, in a sexual relationship, for instance, woman does not exist as full-bodied human subject/sexual partner but, rather, as that which causes and sustains male desire—his desire for getting to and getting *back* to the Other. Unveiling the *male* unconscious Lacan pinpoints: he who approaches woman approaches "the cause of his desire that I have designated as object *a*" (Ibid. 72). Lacan adds later, "[w]hat was seen, but only

regarding men, is what they deal with is object *a*, and that the whole realization of the sexual relationship leads to fantasy” (Ibid. 86). Hence, *regarding men (or, shall we say, in the male position)*, there is no such thing as sexual relation (“*il n’y a pas de rapport sexual*”)—the underpinning dictum of Lacan’s *Encore* seminar (a.k.a. *Seminar XX*). There are, at most and at best, sexual fantasies.¹²⁴ Even “love,” as opposed to un-sublimated sexual feelings, appears to be an illusion. Žižek recapitulates Lacan’s thesis on the phenomenon of love in no less poignant a manner:

[M]an’s love for a woman—his very ‘spiritual’, ‘pure’ love as opposed to sexual longings—is a thoroughly *narcissistic* phenomenon: in his love of a woman, man loves only himself, his own ideal image. Man is well aware of the gap that forever separates his miserable reality from this ideal, so he projects, transfers, it on to another, on to the idealized woman. This is why love is ‘blind’: it hinges on the illusion that the ideal we are striving for is already realized in the other, in the object of love. [Italics original] (*The Metastases of Enjoyment* 39-40)

To give Lacan and his formula of sexualization more credit than attack (even *ad hominem* attacks by feminists such as Jane Gallop), Žižek further attests: Lacan “was simply the first to outline the contours of a non-imaginary, non-naturalized theory of sexual difference—of a theory that radically breaks with anthropomorphic sexualization (‘male’ and ‘female’ as the two cosmic principles, etc.) and, as such, is appropriate to modern science” (Ibid. 154).

Now back to Cixous and “The Laugh of Medusa.” As I mentioned earlier in this project, theory, *like narrative*, concerns first and foremost humanity’s innate desire and struggle for freedom—against limitation or constraints imposed by time, space, chaos,

¹²⁴ For a more detailed discussion of Lacan’s sexualized schema, consult the eighth section in Bruce Fink’s *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (1995), 98-125.

Mother Nature, the “nature” of human existence (e.g., mortality, illness), or other human constructs and ideologies (e.g., class, race, gender, structure, systematic order, etc.). Theory, *like narrative*, is concerned with humanity’s desire for freedom to desire, and Cixous’ essay epitomizes human desire as such. The notion of *écriture féminine*, championed and developed in “The Laugh of Medusa,” pinpoints *women’s* desire for a freedom to desire their own bodies, voices, and texts as such against enclosure within the symbolic, particularly the phallic, order and discourse supported by the Law- and Name-of-the-Father. Women need write themselves out—*freely*—and write themselves against the discourse of man as master that frigidifies and alienates women from their bodies and voices (screams, Cixous writes, are far better and far more desirable than silences). Women ought to let “the other language speak—the language of 1,000 tongues which knows neither enclosure nor death” (Cixous 270). As Cixous never tires of emphasizing, fluidity and search for non-phallogentric loci of enjoyment in women’s bodies embedded within the texts of *écriture féminine* would empower women to rise against male-dominated enclosure (political, cultural, historical, and semiotic/linguistic enclosure). Yet, while Cixous urges her fellow women to refuse a *referential* positioning to men and the latter’s phallogentrism, this other language—of both *écriture féminine* and of the semiotic poetics proposed by Julia Kristeva—is precisely, in Lacan’s terms, the language of the Other, and the resulting enjoyment *the jouissance of the Other* that Lacan would fain see happening.

What is particularly intriguing, to me, about a theoretical text like “The Laugh of Medusa” is its underlying affect of anxiety and implicit notion of *objet petit a* on a par with the *raison d’être*, affectivity, and energetics of narrative at large. This is the reason for which I include Cixous’ theoretical piece and analyze it as a narrative text in this project. On the surface level, “The Laugh of Medusa” champions and celebrates an

aesthetics of pleasure, a pleasure that belongs with and needs be known to women. Nevertheless, the energetics of the essay is, upon closer examination, fraught with and underpinned by the affect of anxiety. As I discussed earlier in this project, the return of the Other after disappearance in Freud's thesis about his grandson's *fort-da* game may well relieve the human subject of his/her anxiety about the disappearance either of the Other or of the subject him-/herself (the latter case refers to *aphanisis*), but Lacan further informs us in his *Anxiety* seminar that it is the *omnipresence* of the Other who never leaves, disappears, or lacks that gives rise to anxiety. In "The Laugh of Medusa," it is the *omnipresence* of the male Other bearing the Law- and Name-of-the-Father and fear of non-separation from this omnipresence that causes the affect of textual anxiety of Cixous' writing. In other words, the energetics of the essay is founded on and driven forward by this *lack that is not lacking*, and, like narratives in general, the "plot" of "The Laugh of Medusa" takes on a *beginning as lack*.

Having begun in this fashion, discursivity of the essay is seen to roll yet meanwhile oscillate, again loaded with tension caused by anxiety, among the four interrelated and interactive terms: the persistent return of the Other, the Other's omnipresence, fear of non-separation, and desire (and call) for breaking out of enclosure as such. Hence, for instance, the verb "cut" runs throughout Cixous' text like a musical motif, accompanied by a legion of similar verbs all pointing to the one function of breaking apart the state of non-separation between woman/women and the male or phallic Other that threatens to return, stay, and dominate for good. This textual oscillation between woman/women and the masculine phallic Other fills up "the middle" of Cixous' plot and delays an easy end to come.

This oscillating energetics on the basis of the four above-stated terms is propped up and propelled by a dialectic of the four Lacanian discourses—the Master’s, the University’s, the Hysteric’s, and the Analyst’s. Dialectic of discourses as such animates and prolongs “the middle” of the plot of “The Laugh of Medusa.” Cixous does not hesitate to pronounce the discourse of psychoanalysis (here in this essay functioning, in Lacanian terms, as the discourse of the University) as that which supports and sustains the Master’s discourse. Namely, Cixous sees Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalytic discourses as agents that conspire/aspire to produce women as split, lacking, alienated, *not all/whole (pas-toute)* subjects for the benefit of men within western phallogocentric society, culture, and tradition. Cixous spills out:

By virtue of affirming the primacy of the phallus and of bringing it into play, phallogocentric ideology has claimed more than one victim. [...]. For, if psychoanalysis was constituted from woman, to repress femininity (and not so successfully a repression at that—men have made it clear), its account of masculine sexuality is now hardly refutable; as with all the “human” sciences, it reproduces the masculine view, of which it is one of the effects. (266)

Again Cixous strikes (and strikes back):

They riveted us between horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. That would be enough to set half the world laughing, except that it’s still going on. For the phallogocentric sublation is with us, and it’s militant, regenerating the old patterns, anchored in the dogma of castration. They haven’t changed a thing: they’ve theorized their desire for reality! Let the priests tremble, we’re going to show them our sexts! (266)

Once more Cixous calls out to fellow women subjects: “Break out of the circles; don’t remain within the psychoanalytic closure. Take a look around, then cut through!” (274).

The locus of knowledge about women—about “*was will das weib?*”—should no longer be placed in the Master or agents who function within the University’s discourse. To usurp discourses as such, Cixous feels an urgent need to *hysterize* the discourse(s) of women. Given Cixous’ ascription of *écriture féminine* hand in hand with the Lacanian formulation of the Hysteric’s discourse, women ought to write, using their bodies as sites for writing, to address and challenge the Master as the master signifier (S1) on the one hand and, on the other, to produce their own signifiers (e.g., MOTHER) and chains of signification (S2), through which the locus of knowledge about women can be (re)instated in women themselves. In Cixous’ own language: “Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement” (257). Cixous adds: “Why so few texts? Because so few women have as yet won back their body. Women must write through their bodies, they must invent the impregnable language that will wreck partitions, classes, and rhetorics, regulations and codes, they must submerge, cut through, get beyond the ultimate reserve-discourse, including the one that laughs at the very idea of pronouncing the word ‘silence,’ the one that, aiming for the impossible, stops short before the word ‘impossible’ and write it as ‘the end’ ” (267).

Lacan, in his *Encore* seminar, claims that the word “woman” cannot be written without “a bar through it” (72). He explains that “[t]here’s no such thing as Woman, Woman with a capital *W* indicating the universal” (72-73). Cixous, however repulsed by psychoanalytic discourse, including that of Lacan, unwittingly and paradoxically echoes this Lacanian concept—that woman exists in her exuberant plurality and heterogeneity. In “The Laugh of Medusa,” Cixous champions a writing of woman *for women*; she writes,

there is “no general woman, no one typical woman. What they have *in common* I will say. But what strikes me is the infinite richness of their individual constitutions: you can’t talk about *a* female sexuality, uniform, homogeneous, classifiable into codes—any more than you can talk about one unconscious resembling another. Women’s imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasm if incredible” [Italics original] (258). Women ought to write in search of new signifiers to represent themselves for one another, and “mother” can, according to Cixous, function as a *woman’s* signifier as such, if not *the* master signifier for all women:

There always remains in woman that force which produces/is produced by the other—in particular, the other woman. [...]. There is hidden and always ready in woman the source; the locus for the other. The mother, too, is a metaphor. It is necessary and sufficient that the best of herself be given to woman by another woman for her to be able to love herself and return in love the body that was “born” to her. [...]. The relation to the “mother,” in terms of intense pleasure and violence, is curtailed no more than the relation to childhood (the child that she was, that she is, that she makes, remakes, undoes, there at the point where, the same, she mothers herself. (263)

The dialectic of Cixous’ text does not yet rest with hysterization of woman’s/women’s discourse/discourses. It drives toward the Analyst’s discourse which would “conclude” Cixous’ text in the end. In Cixous, the act of writing per se does not function merely as an intellectual activity or woman’s/women’s weapon against male-dominated enclosure and her/their subversive tool for instituting “the very possibility of change” (261). More than all that: in Cixous, *writing* operates as *l’objet petit a*—not unlike the function of narrative—that causes and sustains women’s desire (for others, other women, mother, and themselves). Writing as *l’objet petit a* is the *raison d’être* that causes woman to ex-

ist, to desire, to get to and get back to those desired others. To Cixous, woman without writing is woman without a body, hence woman without a self. “*Write!*” functions, for Cixous, as an imperative equivalent of “*Jouis!*”; to write is to enjoy, to let her body (and her bodily fluids) flow, to enjoy and take pride in flowing; writing is enjoyment, is *jouissance*: “And why don’t you write? Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it” (259); “We’re stormy, and that which is ours breaks loose from us without our fearing any debilitation. Our glances, our smiles, are spent; laughs exude from all our mouths; our blood flows and we extend ourselves without ever reaching an end; we never hold back our thoughts, our signs, our writing; and we’re not afraid of lacking” (260). Considering the context of “The Laugh of Medusa” in conjunction with the Lacanian formulation of the Analyst’s discourse, writing as *l’objet petit a* addresses the woman position and subjectivity and in doing so produces woman’s own master signifier (S₁). To give birth to a master signifier as such in and on woman’s own terms bespeaks the design and goal of the “narrative end” of Cixous’ text. Writing “the impossible” and encountering “the impossible” in writing (267) is meeting with *the real*—with the order that pre-exists the symbolic and enclosure therein. It is, therefore, towards *both the jouissance of the Other and that of the real* that the textual energetics of “The Laugh of Medusa” drives on. It is the call for women to encounter the real and experience the whole of their experiences as well as the whole of their relationships to one another that constitutes Cixous’ “narrative ending” which embraces a real *jouissance*: “When I write, it’s everything that we don’t know we can be that is written out of me, without exclusions, without stipulation, and everything we will be calls us to the unflagging, intoxicating, unappeasable search for love. In one another we will never be lacking” (275). “The Laugh of Medusa” exemplifies another narrative text in which multiple *jouissances* can coexist in a meaningful way.

Breaking out of phallic enclosure and phallic jouissance, Cixous closes her text on a self-celebrative and triumphant note—and with a jouissance of women’s own. Her *feminine* “narrative” and “narrativity” arrive at the other side of phallic narration. Nonetheless, this “narrative end,” though not of a phallic kind, has been interpreted still as “enclosure” in the male register. Admittedly, Cixous’ call for celebration by means of writing out woman’s *difference* has met with disfavoring criticisms even on the part of her fellow French feminists. Any such call (for the jouissance of the Other or its equivalent) remains still, for Colette Guillaumin (Cixous’ contemporary), under the sway and “effects of domination” (107). Guillaumin puts her own valiant protest this way:

The ideological significance of difference is the distance from the referent. To speak of ‘difference’ is to articulate a rule, a law, a norm—briefly, an absolute which would be the measure, the origin, the fixed point of a relationship, by which the ‘rest’ would be defined. [...]. There is a great realism hidden in the word ‘difference’: the knowledge that there exists a source of evaluation, a point of reference, an *origin of the definition*. And if there is an origin of definition, it means precisely that this definition is not ‘free’. The definition is seen for what it is: a fact of dependence and a fact of domination. From this comes logically the idea of a ‘right’ to be different. [Italics original] (110)

Given Guillaumin’s analysis of the relationship between a theory of sexual difference and the notion of freedom, it is understandably this lack of freedom irrevocably inherent in such a differential theory as Cixous’ that underpins the position of woman even within the framework and texture of *écriture féminine*. This implicit lack of freedom drives Cixous’ text (and textual energies) towards a condition of ever desiring and at the same time towards staying bound to a state of anxiety, while fulfillment of such a desire keeps remaining questionable. As critic Diana Holmes points out, the theory of writing the body “idealize[s] women’s sexual pleasure as an inherently liberating force” (229).

Hence, on the one hand, the jouissances of the Other and of the real immanent in Cixous' theory of *écriture féminine* as a whole and her "Laugh of Medusa" in particular emit and contain altogether a jouissance of ideational beatitude. On the other hand, this vision of woman's/women's newfound freedom to desire continues to evoke skepticism of its idealism. Cixous' "narrative" and theoretical end in "The Laugh of Medusa" is indeed double-edged. Its textual "closure" brings out a lot more than simple "structural finitude." Whether to understand its "closure" as "enclosure" in the phallic register or as "anti-closure" against the symbolic/phallic jouissance shall remain *in-close-able*. The "happy ending" of "The Laugh of Medusa" remains yet problematic and under challenge. I will now veer into another direction and examine Poe's grotesque and arabesque stories for illustration of jouissance of another kind, both in terms of the overall plot orientation in Poe's stories as such and of their narrative ends.

[V]

Poe and the Imaginary Jouissance

Which writer has better, more acutely understood the relationship between jouissance and transgression of law than Edgar Allan Poe? Which writer has better, more poignantly immortalized by means of writing the true nature of jouissance as pleasure in pain, in suffering than Poe? Poe Critic Daniel Hoffman articulates for us, "Poe, bearing his own heart, shows us his inescapable truths, in tales (and a few poems) whose design is so consistent with their ends that we, despite ourselves, take pleasure in what appalls us. Perhaps a part of that pleasure is the reflected knowledge of our own selves which, but for Poe, we might not have had the means or the courage to confront" (337). Indeed, if we desire an unraveling of this perverse human truth through fiction, which better place shall we turn to and look for it other than to Poe's narratives, grotesque or arabesque? (Note: for the pertinence of my following discussion I will have to exclude

Poe's ratiocinatory stories.) What Poe scholarship, with its numerous venues of analyses and interpretations, has not yet achieved is a fruitful discussion of the (en)twin(ed) relation between an understanding of *jouissance* in Poe's stories and that of Poe's stories in the language of *jouissance*. Besides, I would like to argue that Poe's narratives, grotesque and arabesque, cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding, in the first place, of Lacan's imaginary axis concerning the ego's relation to other as *imago* in the register of the imaginary order. This is *not* to say that we need, *as if we do*, yet another(!) psychoanalytic angle and parlance in order to apprehend the plot energetics and unveil the complex, if not too often puzzlingly gruesome, meaning of Poe's texts. Still, I venture a discussion of Poe's writings within the Lacanian framework because I believe and would like to prove the usefulness of such a theoretical grid and vocabulary for further illuminating the psychological dimension in Poe's fiction. Ultimately, I intend to bring out a never-attempted argument that Poe's grotesque and arabesque narratives exert an *imaginary* plot orientation on the whole that leads to "Poe endings" welling in the *imaginary jouissance*.

More than often, "creepy" Poe stories have been read and construed, especially with the advent of the modern age which sees an enthusiastic delving into the psychology of humankind, either as psychological (irrespective of however pathological) dramas of a divided self or as narratives constructed and manipulated by a madman of a diseased mind (which displays psychotic symptoms, most notably delusions, hallucinations, or intensely paranoid obsessions). Poe's contemporary the Reverend Rufus W. Griswold's infamous *ad hominem* obituary has remained well known to Poe biographers, critics, and fan readers. Poe's definitive biographer Arthur Hobson Quinn records that Griswold, having accepted to be the writer's literary executor, "lost no opportunity of dwelling upon Poe's poverty" on the one hand and on the other attacked Poe's perverse and immoral

spirit which, according to Griswold, has become the guiding principle of Poe aesthetics and overshadowed, if not distorted and poisoned, Poe's literary creativity:

“Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions which militate against human happiness. You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler; you could not speak of wealth, but his cheek paled with gnawing envy. The astonishing natural advantages of this poor boy—his beauty, fiery atmosphere—had raised his constitutional self-confidence into an arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into dices against him. Irascible, envious—bad enough, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold repellent cynicism, his passions vented themselves in sneers. There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and, what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or the love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed—not shine, not serve—succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self-conceit.” [Italics original] (qtd. in Quinn 647).

In other words, there is not only a permeating lack of *symbolic* castration in Poe's writing, but also the writer's own fiery refusal to subject to castration by the symbolic order—to submit himself to the laws of human ethics—has galled and exacerbated critics such as Griswold.¹²⁵ Quinn, a rather consistently careful biographer who resists the temptation of coloring Poe's life and works with inferential interpretation based on the writer's psychological, particularly unconscious, state of mind, feels the need to rise upon this occasion concerning Griswold's attack and defends Poe by pointing out: “The damage this article did to Poe's reputation is incalculable. Printed in Horace Greeley's

¹²⁵ For more information about Griswold and Poe's alienation from his contemporary literary and social world, consult, for instance, Sandra Tomc's article on “Poe and His Circle” (*The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*), 21-41.

paper and republished in the *Weekly Tribune* on October 20th, it was accepted as authoritative, and it was copied, even in journals friendly to Poe. It appeared, for example, in the *Richmond Enquirer* on October 13th and it created that *first* impression, so hard to efface” (647). Modern critic Kevin J. Hayes also informs us, that, for instance, *Scribner’s Monthly* (October 1875) “characterized him as a madman and attempted to muster evidence in an unconvincing effort to verify the diagnosis in clinical terms” (1). Indeed, Poe criticism and scholarships, contemporary *and* modern, have illustrated a rather prevalent reluctance to chime in with the non-biographical approach and principles of New Criticism. Poe’s life, particularly in terms of his “troubled” and “troubling” mindset, has yielded too much food for thought for anyone curious about Poe not to take in and slowly digest on his or her own. In Poe’s case, the writer’s psychological, even pathological state of being can easily come to feature in the foreground of Poe study and criticism as *the text*, while his works are being pushed into the background functioning as wealthy *contexts* abounding with clues and pieces of “evidence.” The fact that I *am* taking a psychoanalytic approach to Poe’s writings does not, however, bespeak a like-minded wish either to more psychologize Poe’s works or to further pathologize Poe’s problematic personal profile. I have no interest (and faith, in fact) in either practice. Yet, *if* the reading, not of Poe’s “madman” profile, but of the phenomenon of psychosis in Poe’s writings remains valid at all, then there is something invaluable telling about the clinical structure of psychosis for understanding the structure of jouissance in Poe’s narratives.

Psychotic structure entails *foreclosure* as well as the mechanism of imaginary compensation and substitution (the former is in truth more known and discussed than the latter). *Foreclosure* signifies an early-on exclusion and absence of the symbolic Law-and Name-of-the-Father in the formation of the unconscious and psychical reality. The

Law- and Name-of-the-Father simply does not register in the unconscious formation of the human subject—it is *not repressed* (for the phase of repression occurs later in psychological processing), but utterly non-present and ineffectual. Massimo Recalcati, a practicing psychoanalyst, writes, “[t]he Name-of-the-Father is not operative, is unable to rule *jouissance* and articulate *jouissance* to the Law” (*lacanian ink* 26 76). That is to say, *jouissance* in psychosis does not relate to and partake in the Law- and Name-of-the-Father; the psychotic structure recognizes no symbolic *jouissance* derived from any symbolized subject’s castration by and enclosure within *le Non/Nom du Père*. There is no such thing in psychosis and hence no such *jouissance* for the psychotic. Foreclosure, as Recalcati emphasizes, is yet not enough for the psychotic to sustain and endure a stable psychotic make-up. It is the mechanism of *imaginary compensation and substitution* that enables the subject to stabilize his latent psychotic structure (prior to any triggering of a psychotic breakdown) and to experience *jouissance* via another venue—“in the compensation through an imaginary identification of the narcissistic type with one’s fellow man,” so to speak (Ibid. 74). Recalcati further informs: “This is precisely the function assigned by Lacan to the identifying compensation: a kind of imaginary prosthesis of the symbolic leg that produces the desired effect of stabilizing the situation of the subject-stool. [...]. The subject remains as the prisoner of a specular relationship, his identity lacks an operative subjectivation since it is the product of a narcissistic identification with his fellow man located as an ideal I” (Ibid. 79). This preliminary understanding of the psychotic structure and structuration—its alienation from the symbolic Other and alignment with the imaginary other instead—is and will prove crucial to my overall argument about Poe’s grotesque and arabesque writing in which, I find, the Law- and Name-of-the-Father is conspicuously lacking and in its stead exists the powerfully overwhelming relation between self and other, in a word, the imaginary axis. Again, this is *not* to say or infer (or confirm) that Poe is a psychotic and

therefore writes psychotic-driven creepy stories. Far from it. I am here merely borrowing the useful terms of a specific clinical structure in order to manifest and discuss, with vocabulary of a proven currency, the imaginary-oriented jouissance in the structuration of Poe narratives.

A textual lack of the symbolic Other or symbolic relationship in Poe is also observed and succinctly commented on by Daniel Hoffman:

There are no parents in the tales of Edgar Poe, narry a Mom nor a Dad. Instead all is symbol. And what does this total repression of both sonhood and parenthood signify but that to acknowledge such relationships is to venture into territory too dangerous, too terrifying, for specificity. Desire and hatred are alike insatiable and unalloyed. But the terrible war of superego upon the id, the endless battle between conscience and impulse, the unsleeping enmity of the self and its Imp of the Perverse—these struggles are enacted and re-enacted in Poe’s work, but always in disguise. (226)

Note: Hoffman’s statement that “all is symbol” in Poe should be understood here as reference to Poe’s literary symbolism in the literary rather than Lacanian psychoanalytic sense. Lack of the office administered by the Law- and Name-of-the-Father results in lack of symbolic castration—namely, castration taking place on the plane of the symbolic order and suffered at the hands of the punitive castrating Other. Nevertheless, this lack of symbolic castration on the part of the protagonists or narrators in Poe’s writings can be and has, in fact, been rather popularly interpreted as the sons’ rebellions against the omnipotent and threatening FOther (in stories exemplified by “The Tell-Tale Heart,” for instance), and this would be the literary exegesis commenced and elaborated by psychoanalyst Marie Bonaparte. Writing on Poe’s life and works and publishing in the early 1970s with particular Freudian psychoanalytic attention to Poe’s “Oedipus complex”

and red-light emphasis on the son-writer's never-dying love and desire for his tubercular mother and enmity towards John Allan as a surrogate father, Bonaparte sees and treats Poe's literary creations according to the Oedipus-complex-situated grid of mother-incest and father rivalry.

Despite Bonaparte's insight, exegesis as such does not explain a distinctive absence of the symbolic order within Poe's writing; the symbolic world in Poe (again with the exceptions of his ratiocinative narratives) simply does not exist—it is either foreclosed or absented. Plus, such exegesis as Bonaparte's can neither fully account for the persistent presence of powerful doubles that are never explicitly referred to by any character as "fathers" (or as fatherly figures) in Poe's narratives, nor can such exegesis illumine Poe's narrators' engagements in confronting the doubles in order to achieve *jouissance*. On the other hand, such interpretative approach for however good and legitimate reasons risks much, if not *too much*, reading of Poe's personal life and direct translation of the writer's psychological crises into the textual affectivity of his writing. True, although the symbolic and the imaginary psychic orders are never mutually exclusive and should not be comprehended as two clean-cut phases and terms, what I really want to drive at here is the argument that it is *not* the *jouissance* of or concerning the symbolic order, including that enjoyment derived from a son's joyful Oedipus-complex-driven rebellion against symbolized family structure, which Poe celebrates in his stories. If the word "castration" is to be spoken at all with regard to Poe's narratives, it is *imaginary*, rather than symbolic, castration that takes place in Poe's writings, and, the textual phenomenon of *jouissance*, to boot, occurs elsewhere. It locates on an order of a different plane, on a different psychical axis.

Poe's grotesque and arabesque narratives abound in the human relation between self and other. This distinctive human relational dialectic is that which orients Poe's stories toward the imaginary order of his fictional psychologism. Attention needs be paid to this small un-capitalized other as an imaginary other (or imago), as opposed to the big capitalized Other as the symbolic Other, signifying the Law- and Name-of-the-Father. That which characterizes the imaginary axis in Lacan's "L schema" is precisely the mirror-stage relationship consisting of identification and transference between one's ego and other, or, in Lacan's topological language, between a' and a . Succinctly Lacan designates a' as the human subject's "ego, that is, his form as reflected in his objects" and a as "his objects" (*Écrit* 183). What Lacan calls the ego's "objects" here pertaining to his L schema of the 1950s refers back to what he has earlier named as the ego's "imagos" in his well-known 1949 exposition on the mirror stage—the stage where "the specular *I*" forms on the basis of the relation and interaction between the ego and its specular other(s)/imago(s) and thereupon depends the transformation of "the specular *I*" into "the social *I*" [*Italics original*] (*Ibid.* 7). Yet, such a psychical developmental process can take place fraught with uneasy complications. Aggressivity, for one, tells the tale, very much a Poe tale indeed, of the ego's (narcissistic) self-defensive mechanism against threats of self-disintegration or, in Lacan's word, "fragilization" imposed by and right in the face of a motor-reflexively stronger, more unified, and hence more powerful specular image *perceived and believed as such*. It is for fear of (being reminded of) the unpleasant, anxiety-provoking fact of self-disunity *and* jealousy of an other capable of a superior self-command that the ego could display a rivalrous and aggressive attitude toward its imago. This precarious imaginary axis, as Lacan spells out in *Écrits*, often results in a tricky analytical situation wherein the analysand sees the analyst as nothing more than his or her imaginary other and, hence, would exhibit hostility or aggressivity

towards the latter as a powerful imaginary other.¹²⁶ For the development of “the specular *I*” to segue into that of “the social *I*,” there must be an interposition or intervention of the symbolic overwriting the imaginary axis. This is what I find peculiarly lacking in Poe’s grotesque and arabesque narratives, at least in the ones I am about to discuss.

Of course, Poe is not the first and only writer who has ventured into the psychological recesses of the human subject. Nevertheless, *a predominance of the imaginary axis of ego-other* in his stories is that which I believe distinguishes Poe’s fictive psychological dimension and plot orientation from those of many others, say, for instance, from Franz Kafka. In Kafka, it is the *symbolic* axis and dialectic of *self-Other* that rule Kafka’s plots and plotting. In Kafka, (e.g., *Metamorphosis*, *The Castle*, *The Trial*), the dialectic of discourses and arena of contention lie between the individual-heroes and the bureaucratic Other that wields the power endowed by the Law- and Name-of-the-Father. Power struggles lie between the individual-heroes and agencies of the symbolic order; political and spiritual battles are fought on *symbolic* grounds. In Poe, the psychological dimension of human nature and dramas of human relational conflicts are expounded and executed on a different plane. Human aggression and aggressivity that result in many a murder and crime in Poe’s narratives have no bearing on the existing symbolic order and witness a lack of acting-out of symbolic intervention (in the psychical sense of symbolic castration). Police or hangmen as law enforcers and death penalties as law enforcements may be present in Poe’s narratives such as “The Black Cat” (1843), “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843), and “The Imp of the Perverse” (1845), yet it is never the agents of the symbolic order that wrench the truth of a murder out of the narrator-perpetrator. Let alone castration, punishment of self does not lie on the side of the symbolic Other in Poe. In other words, the dialectic of discourses in Poe’s stories does not exist between

¹²⁶ On the topic of the relationship among ego-formation, the role of imagos, and aggressivity, consult, for instance, the following two articles compiled in Bruce Fink’s translation of Lacan’s *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 2002): “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function” (1949), 3-9, and “Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis” (1948), 10-30.

self and the punitively castrating symbolic Other. In fact, there is a lack of the Other as such.

Beginning as lack of the symbolic and repetition of the imaginary *jouissance* permeate and direct the plots of many a Poe narrative. It is the imaginary order that reigns in Poe and the imaginary axis that directs the dialectic of and within self. Imagoes of doubles appear as pounding refrains, operating with a gradation of nuanced difference from narrative to narrative: from, for instance, “Metzengerstein” (1832), “The Fall of the House of the Usher” (1845), “William Wilson” (1845), to “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1845), “The Black Cat” (1845), and “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846).

“Metzengerstein,” the first of Poe’s stories written and published, epitomizes this *lack* of symbolic and reign of the imaginary. It tells the tale of an ancient rivalry between the families of Berlifitzing and Metzengerstein and the (failed) attempt of young Baron Metzengerstein at vanquishing the former via Count Wilhelm Berlifitzing’s surviving stallion. The tale, as critic Benjamin Franklin Fisher points out in writing about Poe and the Gothic tradition, “reads almost as if it were an encyclopedia of ‘German’ supernatural horrors,” while “[t]he supernatural horse adumbrates the near otherworldly qualities of the cats in ‘The Black Cat,’ published ten years later” (Fisher 80, 81). Thus seen in the light of the Gothic tradition, the horse has been quite uniformly taken by critics both as a *symbol* of supernatural immortality which mocks human fatality and, much more so, as a Gothic mechanism and the tale taken as Poe’s deliberate twist and ironization of Gothic plot construction.¹²⁷ Yet, more is at stake in this Poe narrative than the writer’s legacy or

¹²⁷ For Gothicism in “Metzengerstein,” see Fisher’s article “Poe and the Gothic Tradition” (*The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*), 72-91. Also, see, for instance, Poe critic G. R. Thompson’s introduction to “Metzengerstein” (*Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe*), 30-31. On a different front of literary exegesis, Marie Bonaparte, too, treats the “monstrous” stallion as a symbol (according to her usual Freudian interpretive orientation). In her reading, the horse

contestation of literary Gothic tradition. A lack of symbolic castration is present at the outset of the plot: prior to his encounter with the “enemy’s” horse, young Baron Metzengerstein is described by the narrator as someone who refuses to mourn the early deaths of his parents, his mother’s in particular, and fails to observe the mourning rituals:

And, indeed, for the space of three days the behavior of the heir out-heroded Herod, and fairly surpassed the expectations of his most enthusiastic admirers. Shameful debaucheries—flagrant treacheries—un-heard-of atrocities—gave his trembling vassals quickly to understand that no servile submission on their part—no punctilios of conscience on his own—were thenceforward to prove any security against the remorseless and bloody fangs of a petty Caligula.
(Thompson, ed., 96)

Rather interestingly but not uncommonly, Charles E. May construes this Poe story as that of a prophecy fulfillment and likens it to Sophocles’ *Oedipus*. Nevertheless, he lets “the old hag’s” prophecy—“fire and water might sooner mingle than a Berlifitzing clasp the hand of a Metzengerstein”—pass unobserved. Presumably relying more on the other opening prophecy which dictates, “A lofty name shall have a fearful fall when, like the rider over his horse, the mortality of Metzengerstein shall triumph over the immortality of Berlifitzing,” May writes: “[t]he most obvious characteristics of the story is the unifying force demanded by the prophecy that opens the work, for once a prophecy has been announced there is nowhere else for a story to go except toward its fulfillment” (17). Not much later May drives home the same idea again that “[t]o begin a story with a prophecy is to embed the story’s ending in its beginning, as in *Oedipus*, for the prophecy

“represents a condensation of the ‘mothers’ ” (278). Much like the black cat in another Poe story, the Berlifitzing-Metzengerstein horse “represents an immense mother-figure” who simply “refuses to be banished from the son’s life, even in death”; the horse in “Metzengerstein” thus appears as “the symbol of the destroying mother” (472, 281), fraught with connotations of Poe’s desire for and anxiety about the “mother-incest.” My own reading, though also of a psychoanalytic vein, veers from Bonaparte’s mother-oriented and *Oedipus-complex*-driven interpretation.

story begins with the language of promise and then moves inevitably toward the fulfillment of that promise in narrative” (Ibid.). To read this Poe story (merely) as a prophecy-driven tale is to miss the uniqueness of Poe narrative even as such. True, as prophesied, there is no way that “fire and water” should mingle in “Metzengerstein.” However, the locution “fire and water” tells more than a language of prophetic symbolism. The lack of mourning tears (“water”) for one’s separation and split from the (f)Other or (m)Other bespeaks the refusal of lack in young Baron Metzengerstein’s human subject position within the symbolic order. Taking in its stead is the *fiery* imaginary axis of Baron Metzengerstein’s ego and the stallion as its imaginary other.

The lack of the hero’s symbolic relationship with his parents, in life *and* in death, is not all. As narration progresses, the narrator never fails to emphasize a (lamentable) receding, withdrawal, and eventual disappearance of the symbolic order, along with its various forms of relationships, from the hero’s state of being and state of mind. From the date of the hero’s encounter with Count Berlifitzing’s stallion:

[A] marked alteration took place in the outward demeanor of the dissolute young Baron Frederick Von Metzengerstein. Indeed his behavior disappointed every expectation, and proved little in accordance with the views of many a maneuvering mamma—while his habits and manners, still less than formerly, offered any thing congenial with those of the neighboring aristocracy. He was never to be seen beyond the limits of his own domain, and, in this wide and social world, was utterly companionless—unless, indeed, that unnatural, impetuous, and fiery-colored horse, which he henceforward continually bestrode, had any mysterious right to the title of his friend. (Thompson, ed., 100)

Even the function of language, which constitutes and characterizes the symbolic order, rapidly stops to operate in the hero: the young baron’s “haughty and laconic” response to

neighborly invitations—“Metzengerstein will not attend”—soon puts an end to all necessities and possibilities of symbolic discursivity within the world of the narrative. The rider and the horse become one and the horse stands in for the rider’s double: “the young Metzengerstein seemed riveted to the sale of that colossal horse, whose intractable audacities so well accorded with the spirit of his own” (Ibid. 101). Having thus oriented the narrative, along with its hero, out of the symbolic world and relationships, the plot is by now fully anchored in the imaginary domain between the hero and the horse as double.

Being the hero’s double, his imaginary other, the stallion, as the narrator marks with specificity, bears no name of Metzengerstein and thus does not function as a symbolized signifier, signifying the hero to and within the symbolic chain of signification, for, referring back to Lacan, what is a signifier but that which represents the human subject for another signifier within the symbolic structure and structuration. Irresistibly trapped within the imaginary axis with the horse, the hero closes himself off, both physically and psychically, from the symbolic order and function therein; hence, I here state again, the narrative plot is locked in the imaginary realm. It is in the *jouissance of the imaginary* that young Baron Metzengerstein relishes and suffers his as well as the horse’s being. The narrative end sees the physical and psychical interlocking of the hero and the horse, with the former, not the demonic double, eventually perishing in the fire. (En)closure in the imaginary leads to nothing else but dead ends. Yet, (en)closure within such terrain does not always tell the tale of a barren wasteland. There is *jouissance*, as the ending suggests, that fatally attracts and supports transgression as such, and, for this reason, a however unreasonable reason for pleasure-in-suffering, perhaps this narrative ending does unveil something more than either a writer’s ultimate twist and irony of literary Gothicism or another pronouncement on the power of prophetic (self-)fulfillment.

As “Metzengerstein” manifests, plot engagement with the device of doubles would significantly contribute to the imaginary orientation of narrative. However, *not all* engagements as such would define the imaginary dimension of plot orientation. Dostoevsky’s novel *The Double* exemplifies a different employment of the same device: unlike Poe’s counterparts, Dostoevsky’s double, Mr. Goliadkin, Jr., is aligned with the castrating symbolic Other, partaking in symbolic functions and human relationships, and used to enforce castration of the hero, Mr. Goliadkin, Sr., by the symbolic f(O)ther figures and the order itself. In a word, Dostoevsky’s double functions as an agent of the symbolic in service of the Master’s discourse. The narrative end of *The Double* signifies that the symbolic order and the Master’s discourse triumph over anything else when the novel closes with the hero’s enclosure in the state asylum. Doubles in Poe’s narratives serve no symbolic order. Such an order either gradually fades into nonexistence (as exemplified by “Metzengerstein”) or does not exist in other grotesque and arabesque stories, leaving the heroes and the doubles confined strictly to the *imaginary* domain. But no matter in Poe or in Dostoevsky or many others who employ such a device, doubles are far from being weak and pitiful. Rather, doubles in Poe’s stories are told or self-righteously reported *by the narrators themselves* to exist as powerful (too powerful!), overwhelming, and most importantly, oppressive threats to the freedom and psychical unity of the human subject. Doubles, most notably William Wilson’s double, are omnipresent, and it is this no lack of lacking in doubles’ presence and gestalt that gives cause to the narrators’ anxieties as well as the affect of anxiety in Poe’s narratives. Such doubles should not be endured and need be vanquished, even removed for good, and plotting against these doubles along the imaginary axis of self and other determines the overall imaginary plot orientation of Poe’s grotesque and arabesque writings. It is the narrators’ struggles for *freedom*, physical *and* psychical, against the rule of the

double that drive the energetics of Poe's narrative plots and the avenger-executioners' plots of revenge and murder.

Yet, just what makes the doubles all so oppressively powerful in the eyes of Poe's narrator-protagonists who unswervingly believe and relentlessly account themselves as victims and preys to their "deliberately" malicious oppressors is and still remains the pivotal—the first and ultimate—question of Poe's texts. The heart of this question, in truth, points to and unveils the locus of *jouissance* along the ego-other imaginary axis. Placed and understood here within Poe's (con)texts, *jouissance* bespeaks one's relation to his/her fellow beings, and, as Lacan pinpoints in his *Encore* seminar, *jouissance* is in essence *jealousie* (100). This human psychical illusion that the locus of *jouissance* is placed elsewhere outside oneself explicates the phenomenon in which one cannot seriously love one's neighbor (*Nebenmensch*) but, instead, covets what his/her fellow being possesses. It is not so much the neighbor's money, land, or husband/wife that one covets (for assets as such function merely as metonymies of one's desire). It is *jouissance in other* that one truly covets and for that one is willingly to risk a transgression of law for taking back *the* *jouissance* that should have been one's own. The locus of *jouissance* is found first and foremost in Poe's writings not in one's self but in the other as imago—this explains the underpinning reason for the protagonists' rivalrous *Lebensneid*. For instance, in "Metzengerstein," *jouissance* is perceived by the young hero Baron Frederick Metzengerstein to be located in the powerful and untamable stallion that possesses a superhuman or supernatural strength to dare him; in "William Wilson," the double bearing the same hateful namesake; in "The Tell-Tale Heart," the old man with a vulturine eye; in "The Cask of Amontillado," the locus of *jouissance* is first placed in Fortunato, the neighbor, and not in Montresor, the narrator-protagonist himself. It is the double William Wilson, *according to the narrator*, who possesses the

“tyrannical” power and enjoyment of persistently smiting the narrator “with an idea of my own utter weakness and helplessness” (Thompson, ed., 259). It is the old man with his “Evil Eye” that hideously “vexes” the narrator day and night (as long as it is wide open) without suffering the latter’s sufferance. And it is Fortunato who, up until his murder, had relished thrashing a “thousand of injuries” upon the narrator Montresor who, until his revenge, “had borne as I best could” (Ibid. 496).

Poe’s narratives as such bear further testimony to Lacan’s postulation that *knowledge is the means of jouissance*¹²⁸ and concede the truth that this *other*-located jouissance has a great deal to do with *other*-located knowledge. In Poe’s plotting, however unwittingly, the locus of knowledge is placed in other to begin with, which gives rise to and reinforces the (protagonists’) fearful notion—and jealous suspicion—of jouissance in other. That the locus of knowledge (of oneself, in particular) is elsewhere located and beyond one’s own reach presents itself as a trembling thought to the human subject: s/he who possesses knowledge possesses jouissance; s/he who “owns” the locus of jouissance wields a haunting power. This *other*-located knowledge and jouissance need be taken back and repossessed in order to ensure one’s psychical unity and safety, and reclamation of knowledge by way of horrid violence becomes, for Poe’s heroes, just *the way to jouissance*. Hence, what precedes, supports, and drives to culminate in Poe’s textual effect of Gothic horror is his textual affect of anxiety which roots in the ever-presence of an other believed to lack neither knowledge nor jouissance.

Placed in this light, “The Tell-Tale Heart,” for instance, should yield a different reading than that which tells the narrator’s sonly rebellion against and castration of the

¹²⁸ Consult, for instance, the chapter “Knowledge, a means of *jouissance*” in Lacan’s *Seminar XVII (The Other Side of Psychoanalysis)*, 39-53.

(F)Other in surveillance. The ever-watchful Eye of the old man *knows*. Knowledge about oneself is located in the other's Eye/I, irrespective of this other being a (F)Other/father figure or not. Really, the latter is not the point, at least not the whole point. It is the *other*-situatedness of knowledge and jouissance that galls the narrator and prompts him to murder, to deprive the other of his locus—of knowledge, power, and ensuing enjoyment of oneself. To deprive the other's locus as such, the narrator needs first to identify as well as to *identify with* the power of that locus-in-other. To take back that locus possessed and relished by the old man (or so believed), the narrator needs out-watch the latter's ever-watchful Eye. The narrator admits his careful surveillance over the old man prior to his action of crime. In doing so, he not only identifies with but also takes into his own possession the *other*-situated locus of knowledge and jouissance. In a word, he becomes the other who knows. This psychical substitution of one for the other bespeaks the ultimate twist of Poe's imaginary plot (not particularly in this story, but, for instance, in "The Cask of Amontillado" as well). It is only when the *other*-situated locus is present—when the old man's Eye opens—that the narrator suffers the greatest pleasure-in-pain and takes his subsequent reclaiming action. The battle between self and other is fought on the imaginary plane. Sadly, the locus-in-other can never be deprived and rid of for good as the narrative ending manifests. The old man dies, along with his "evil" Eye, but the heart still beats. Transferred from one organ to another, the locus-in-other remains "beating" mercilessly at the narrative end. The police officers as enforcers of the symbolic law and order in the last scene are incapable of "castrating" the murderer; rather, their interrogating presence only further traps the narrator within the *imaginary* existence that feeds off on a self-other rivalry. Truth comes out because the young perpetrator wishes to flaunt that *he*, neither the symbolic Other (e.g., the police) nor his imaginary other (the old man), possesses the locus of knowledge, hence jouissance. Such a narrative closure encloses the narrator in a life imprisonment in the

imaginary order with a self-defeating *jealouissance*. Closure as such bespeaks enclosure in the imaginary and wells in the imaginary jouissance, a pleasure in overpowering and outrivaling the other yet at the same time a pain in being drowned therein for good.

The point here is not to demonstrate how “perversely” Poe’s narrators’ minds can turn, bend, or exaggerate and, consequently, how *unreliable* such narration can be or must so remain, albeit the relationship between the two has been largely observed and commented upon by critics. Rather, I intend to lay emphasis on a repeated reversal as well as commingling of pleasure and pain in the energetics of Poe’s narratives as such. Take, for another instance, “The Cask of Amontillado,” one of the most anthologized and discussed stories by Poe. Montresor’s revengeful plot within the plot of the narrative is constructed upon the transgression not only of the mor(t)al law but also the law of the pleasure principle. Here again, Montresor’s own plot and the narrative plot are energized and oriented by the predominating imaginary axis of self and other. At the outset of either plot, the locus of pleasure is found in Fortunato who has done a “thousand injuries” to the narrator and has greatly enjoyed himself “one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season” (Thompson, ed., 496). The locus of pain, on the other hand, is found in Montresor, (reportedly) the wronged and enduring (despite the fact that he has by the time of the carnival season hatched a murderous plan). To bait Fortunato into his dungeon-lair, Montresor ingeniously places the locus of wine knowledge and that of the enjoyment of such knowledge in his rival, from whom, as the narrator asserts in his earlier narration, he does not differ “in this respect [...]—I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could” (Ibid.). That is to say, Montresor lures his prey by feignedly supporting the locus of jouissance in his other. Given the Lacanian thesis that one’s jouissance is *in the form of* the jouissance of

the other,¹²⁹ Montresor's plot, together with the plot of the narrative, succeeds in establishing this form concerning one's *jouissance* in relation to that of the other. It is only when *jouissance* is located in Fortunato in the first place that Montresor is able to relish the other's *jouissance* as his own and eventually claims it back.

Noticeably, Montresor entices his rival with more rivalry and with the transgressive power of *jouissance*: he pits his rival against Luchresi, playing treacherous fiddle upon Fortunato's imaginary ego-other axis, and lures Fortunato into his death trap. Each step of Fortunato's proximity to and descent into Montresor's wine cellar and family catacombs is accompanied by the latter's "friendly" council and warning: "My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi—" (497); "My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre" (Ibid.); "'Come,' I said, with decision, 'we will go back; your health is precious. [...]. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi—'" (498-9); "'The nitre!' I said; 'see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. You cough—'" (500). Etc. The more Montresor forbids with a hypocritical "NO!," the more Fortunato transgresses and transgresses with pleasure (of desiring) *and* pain (of coughing). The more Fortunato violates his own pleasure principle and suffers *jouissance*, the more Montresor transgresses his and appropriates *jouissance* in and on his own terms. Nevertheless, in Fortunato's destiny, pain soon overrides/overwrites pleasure, and, when Montresor (now the wrong-inflictor)

¹²⁹ For more, consult the chapters "Knowledge, a means of *jouissance*" and "Truth, the sister of *jouissance*" in Lacan's *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Norton, 2007), 39-53, 54-68.

finally chains and walls up Fortunato (now the wronged), the reversal of fate and that of the locus of *jouissance* are, *in Montresor's eyes*, accomplished.

Can one truly punish without impunity, as Montresor's ancient family motto dictates ("*nemo me impune lacessit*")? In Montresor's case, what could serve as a better "punishment" than the acquisition of *jouissance*, a commingling of pleasure and pain? At the summit of his vengeful execution, when he hears *no echo* from Fortunato, Montresor grows "impatient," still "call[ing] aloud" (503). At this particular moment, very curious indeed, do we not sense a flicker of Montresor's unadmitted feeling of loss—his impatience about, even fear of an irretrievable loss? Upon the death of Fortunato, Montresor's imaginary axis of ego-other glares wide upon with a hole. When finally there "through the remaining aperture" echoes back "a jingling of the bells," Montresor admits that "[m]y heart grew sick," *claiming* "it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so" (Ibid.). Whether or not this claim is true, transgression of the law of the pleasure principle says as much about pleasure as about pain. With the hero's closing in on his rival other, the plot moves toward its final closure. Closure again, in this (con)text, speaks for enclosure in the imaginary domain. It is in the imaginary that a human subject like Montresor is imprisoned for life at the narrative end. Now that his rival is bodily gone for good, and all about his relation to Fortunato as other that is left to him is the *jouissance* of the imaginary (the pleasure-in-pain in vanquishing the other), narrativity then becomes the only resort with which he resurrects and relives *jouissance* as such and fills/feels the (w)hole of his imaginary ego-other axis.

We do not, can not, and shall not love our neighbors, as Poe's narratives make explicit. "Neighbors as others" is the *imaginary* trademark of many a Poe's plot and plotting. What Poe or Poe's narrators call in "The Black Cat" and "The Imp of the Perverse" (1846) the *perverse*ness of human nature is what Lacan names as *jouissance*.

It is worth quoting here at length Poe's own language voiced by his narrator in "The Black Cat," a short expository discourse about, and in tandem with plot development around, the relationship between human perverseness (or *jouissance*) and transgression of law on the one hand and, on the other, the intricate relation between pleasure and pain. The following narrative occasion takes place after the one night, "returning home, much intoxicated," the narrator blinded his beloved cat pet named Pluto with his pen-knife:

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. [...]. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart—one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should *not*? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is *Law*, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to *vex itself*—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;—hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;—hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I

felt it had given me no reason of offence;—hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin—a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it—if such a thing were possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God. [Italics original] (Thompson, ed., 392-93)

Understandably (judging from the text quoted above), the narrator *transfers* a violence that would or should have been directed towards his very self onto an innocent creature instead as his proxy imago. In hanging Pluto the cat, the narrator manages to “vex” and consciously condemn his own soul, and enjoys a pleasurable-yet-painful *jouissance* of transgressing the law, not only the symbolic law of “Thou shalt not kill,” but also, and perhaps more significantly, the regulative law of the pleasure principle. Scant textual evidence further demonstrates that the narrator’s killing act does *not* in itself constitute a protest against the symbolic order, and the reason why he suffers such a reckless and irredeemable hate against himself does not pertain to my discussion in point. But Lacan does tell us how aggressively and violently one can act towards one’s imagos as proxies of transferred self-aggression,¹³⁰ and Dylan Evans puts it succinctly well enough, “Lacan situates aggressivity in the dual relation between the ego and the counterpart” (6). Thus, instead of perceiving the killing of the cat as the narrator’s acting-out against the symbolic, it is precisely because the narrator first disfigures the body of the cat and later murders it *as the imago of his own body* that he experiences the *jouissance* of the imaginary. Another of Poe’s narratives, “William Wilson,” ends in this same fashion and

¹³⁰ See, for instance, Lacan’s article “Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis” (1948). I will quote here a pertinent passage: “It is this capture by the imago of the human form—rather than *Einfühlung*, the absence of which is abundantly clear in early childhood—that dominates the whole dialectic of the child’s behavior in the presence of his semblable between six months and two and a half years of age. Throughout this period, one finds emotional reactions and articulated evidence of a normal transitivity. A child who beats another child says that he himself was beaten; a child who sees another child fall, cries. Similarly, it is by identifying with the other that he experiences the whole range of bearing and display reactions—whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behaviors, the slave identifying with the despot, the actor with the spectator, the seduced with the seducer” (*Écrits* 20)

jouissance; in enjoying finally killing and vanquishing his double (his specular other), the narrator meanwhile suffers the pain of aggression against his very self: “It was Wilson; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said: ‘*You have conquered, and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead—dead to the world, to Heaven and to Hope! In me didst thou exist—and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself*’ ” [Italics original] (Thompson, ed., 261). Accordingly, such narratives, including those discussed earlier, engage the reader in the dark imagination of the fictive worlds that operate predominately and, on many occasions, exclusively on the *imaginary* axis of self-other. They unveil a distinctive psychical dimension that encloses not only their dialogic narrative space but also the reader in a claustrophobic human relation and dynamics. Aggressivity, then, features a critical affect of the imaginary plot, and acts of aggression against other or self become parts and parcels of this type of plot orientation.

Whether the imaginary other can be silenced or vanquished is another question. While Poe’s heroes, perpetrators or not, may well enjoy the imaginary jouissance, his dead, murdered or not, do not suffer their passing in vain. Like the repressed of the unconscious, Poe’s silenced and vanquished always return. They break out of their entombment at narrative ends, and, when they do, the narratives unveil the *jouissance of the Other*—the jouissance that eludes, even defies symbolic castration (e.g., murder) or enclosure (e.g., entombment). Such of Poe’s narratives become the prima exemplars of narratives that outlandishly reject Peter Brooks’ narratological model, according to which the inorganic (nonnarratability) travels a trajectory of plot in order to return, again, to the inorganic (nonnarratability) and “*in pace requiescat!*”¹³¹; in peace Poe’s

¹³¹ I deliberately take this phrase “rest in peace” from Poe’s own well-known story “The Cask of Amontillado” (1846).

dead do not rest. In death they yearn for a return to life and narratability. Indeed, not until their voices (and screams) are heard can Poe's narratives come to their "rightful" closural ends.

In other words, Poe's narrative closure is more than often built on antecedent anti-closure. Berenice, Morella, and the lady Madeline Usher rank among the most well-known instances of Poe's unquiet dead. The constant returns of Poe's female characters from death have not escaped critics' notice and theorization. Marie Bonaparte sees such returning female characters as haunting irrepressible mother figures in which Poe reveals his mother-incest desire and anxiety. On a different front, feminist critics have lashed Poe for killing off his female characters. In critiquing Poe's compositional "male" tendency to write about the "feminine ideal," Karen Weekes protests that "in Poe's fictional and poetic world, the suffering and death of the beloved figure repeatedly pales into insignificance beside the self-absorption of her survivor," and that "Poe's female characters thus become a receptacle for their narrator's angst and guilt, a *tabula rasa* on which the lover inscribes his own needs. His fictional 'ideal' is a woman who can be subsumed into another's ego and who has no need to tell her own tale; she is killed off so quickly that her silence is inscribed quite irrevocably" (Weekes 150). Such reading not only egregiously misses the returns of Poe's female figures—a significant "refrain" in Poe's writings, indeed—but also remains blind to the narratability embodied by these returns. Whether or not Poe exhibits a *male* authorial tendency to construct and reinforce the "feminine ideal" in his writing (it is not my concern here), I neither wish nor agree to place a gendered emphasis on the deaths or killings of Poe's female characters. Male *or* female, the return of the dead in Poe signifies the return of the narratable; in a word, narratability. In fact, we can argue that returns of Poe's dead or

killed-of women characters speak precisely to a female desire and rebellion against *male* (en)closure.

The narrative end of “The Fall of the House of Usher,” for instance, illustrates the jouissance of the Other as opposed to (en)closure in male narration and in an ending comprising and celebrating the phallic jouissance. The beginning of the narrative depicts its narrator approaching on horseback the decrepit house of Usher, as if, from the first gloomy depiction of the house and its environs, he were visiting a cheerless yet meanwhile “unquiet” grave—a grave with eyes of its own (indeed, the “eye-like windows” are irrepressibly mentioned/observed more than once by the narrator). This inquietude of the house as stirring grave set forth by Poe at the outset of the narrative already suggests anti-closure (i.e., the ghost will eventually come out of the grave) in the later progression of the plot. And who brings anti-closure—the breaking-out of the tomb/entombment—into the narrative end but a female character, the lady Madeline of Usher? That is to say, the narrative does not and cannot properly “close” until the female character’s anti-closure against male plotting and narration of entombment as phallic enclosure is brought to light. The female character’s muffled voice has to be heard. She needs to tell her own story through cries and screams and an embodied re-presence. Her plot against phallic entombment as enclosure is that which takes the upper hand of the narrative plot at the end. To interpret, as does John Gerlach,¹³² that this narrative end returns to “the original darkness and silence” as embedded at the narrative beginning is to miss the ending’s jouissance of the Other as anti-closure forced upon the male narrative closure by the female dead. After all, the narrative end does tell that the house

¹³² See short-story writer John Gerlach’s interpretation of the narrative ending of this Poe’s story in his book *Toward the End: Closure and Structure in the American Short Story* (1985), 30-35.

of Usher breaks “asunder” and is no longer an enclosed and enclosing whole as pictured at the narrative onset.

Notwithstanding, I do not wish to linger on a gendered reading of Poe’s stories. Rather, I would like to argue that Poe astutely understands and puts to practice the transgressive pleasure in breaking out of narrative closural homeostasis. Take “Ligeia” (1845), for another instance: regardless of whether or not the return of the dead lady Ligeia to life is conceived or should be perceived as the narrator’s own imaginary doing (which used to be a scholarly debate starting with Roy Basler in 1944 and James Schroeter in 1961),¹³³ the lady, in whichever fashion, *does* come back from death. Her resurrection (or the narrator’s mental resurrection of his beloved) cogently addresses an intense *human* (male *and* female) desire for narratability that is highly capable of breaking out of both literal and narrative (en)closure as entombment. Poe’s narratives as such, including the embedded stories of and narratability about his female characters, cannot be closed or killed off all so easily.

Considering another of Poe’s narrative albeit this tale is composed in a vastly different rhetorical vein and narrative context, “Some Words with a Mummy” (1845) concludes with the narrator getting ready for his mummification and entombment, yet it is not in death as nonnarratability that the narrator, or mummy-to-be, wishes to quit the reader. It is but for a hopeful and anticipated resurrection to a futurity of more desirable narratability (than that of a nineteenth-century present of deplorable mobocracy) that the narrator opts for a temporary entombment. Poe makes sure that this narrative end will be anticipated by the reader to be reopened in some distant future and continued

¹³³ C.f., Charles E. May’s *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study of the Short Fiction* (Boston: Twayne, 1991), 61-62.

with narration of a new textuality. The narrative closure of this story anticipates anti-closure. The terms of “closure” and “anti-closure” in Poe’s (con)texts should hence be understood as mutually-inclusive and interactive. My point is that Poe’s narrative phenomenon is one in which *death* is closely associated with *narratability*, rather than the end of it.

The dead come back after being unjustly and untimely “closed,” and, with their returns, bring anti-closure on narrative plots. Poe’s narrative closure cannot come into existence without first confronting anti-closure brought forth (or re-opened) by the unjustified dead and their un-accounted deaths. It is not difficult to conclude that Poe’s grotesque and arabesque stories as discussed in this chapter do not arrive at “happy endings,” not even “closures” perceived as “happy endings.” Indeed, while Poe’s stories may close and reach closure of some fashion, such narrative closures are au fond enclosures in the most miserable terms—one can say that there is no such thing as a “happy ending” in such (con)texts that operate solely on the imaginary order and human relational axis. Even a clear-cut divide between “closure” and “anti-closure” becomes in these (con)texts quite untenable because “closure” and “anti-closure” exhibit a most curiously intimate and interactive relationship: one is embedded or set in motion by the other (just like the characters’ relationships between their selves and *imaginary* others). As readers, we may be more appalled than amused (except, for instance, in the case of “Some Words with a Mummy”) by the gruesome resurrections or disturbing signs of resurrections (most often, screams) of Poe’s unquiet dead. For those that remain at the narrative ends, they remain anything but serene and symbolically function-able human subjects. Yet, we are willing to transgress our own pleasure principle by desiring their returns, for, upon returning, they bring us the *jouissance* of the Other—a hole placed against and within symbolic imagination, circumlocution, and (en)closure.

As Poe's own preface to *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1839) makes clear, what is truly *Gothic* about Poe's narratives is "terror [being] not of Germany, but of the soul"—it is the Gothicism of the human mind, whose unity, as Poe well understands, is under the powerful sway both of the imaginary relation between self and other as imago and of the transgressive nature of *jouissance*. Though not courting the specific Lacanian term *jouissance* in his psychoanalytic study of Poe, Daniel Hoffman comprehends Poe's transgression of the pleasure principle; Hoffman again articulates for us the pleasure-pain-induced affectivity inherent in Poe's writing:

His principles are aesthetic—that is to say, he pursues the pleasure principle until, like Freud, indeed, anticipating Freud, he goes beyond the pleasure principle. One side of his art is the effort to create the ineffable, the bower of unutterable delight. But the road thither is terrifying, frightening, for, like the lover of a spirit, Edgarpoe [sic] must put in direct jeopardy the only life he knows—this one, miserable as it is, in his quest for a realm of being more sublime. Therefore delight and terror are everywhere mingled in a weird harmony in Poe's writings. (Hoffman 47)

"The unity of effect or impression" in Poe's philosophy of composition—with the writer's own emphasis on compositional "unity" being *the* aesthetic principle of writing—is in truth founded on and supported by the very disunity of the human subject's psychical realities. In other words, Poe's compositional unity is achieved through the tale-telling of unquiet pulsating psychical disunity. It is not the unary subject (*sujet unaire*)—the human subject of consciousness, consistency, and wholeness—that Poe engages in his writing. At the heart of his composition is the *split* human subject, split from other to whom the subject and his narrative yearn for returning. For such an aesthetic principle of compositional unity which culminates in beauty, Poe has risked transgression of the symbolic ethicality of humanity and in doing so rendered a *poetics of jouissance*,

abounding in and comprised of commingled enjoyment—of delight and terror, pleasure and pain.

Epilogue: Finding Home

We read, write, and use narratives to sustain ourselves as *desiring human subjects*. As shown throughout the trajectory of this project, desire points to and presupposes lack. Narratives are thus metonymic (and metaphoric) ways through which we humans keep our desires alive and at the same time deal with the lack within us. The Lacanian lack not only signifies the human existential black hole but, more fundamentally, it bespeaks a state of *manque-à-être*, “want-to-be.” But want to be *what*? It is true that lack as such connotes the human desire for return to/of the real—the state of non-lack, non-split wholeness. Let me also posit here that lack causes and sustains our human desire—to (want to) be home or desire home. *Narrative, in this light, allows us (human readers, writers, as well as fictional characters) to find home with that which/whom we seek and desire.*

Of course, in suggesting this, I am by no means equating finding “home” in or through narrative with reaching narrative or existential “closure,” “happy ending,” or “lucid repose.” It could be so (i.e., finding home is finding closure) *if* that is what one (including a given narrative or fictional character) seeks and desires. What I mean by “home,” nevertheless, is a state of being, desiring, and even, in the best cases, belonging. “Home” is, in this light, the existential or narrative space wherein that which/whom we seek dwells or resides. Thus, when narrative enables us to be, desire, or eventually find home, it brings us to the proximity of that sphere wherein the object or o/Other¹³⁴ of our desire inhabits. I hope by now the relation between (reading) narrative and human desire has become clear enough: narrative functions as objet petit a—cause of desire—

¹³⁴ As explained in the introduction, my written expression of “o/Other” can refer either to the imaginary other (such as a mirror image, a specular other as a projected ideal ego) or to the symbolic Other.

with or through which we manage to *get to* the object or o/Other of our desire. (Note my use of “get to,” instead of a simple, resolute “get,” underscoring not only the possibility of our *not* getting what we desire at a given narrative end but also, and more importantly, the fact that narratives function as *metonymic* ways for our appropriation or approximation as such.) In a word, to find home is to find the place where we would like to be, to return or get near to because home signifies, or points to, the locus of our heart’s desire(s). Narratives send us on many a journey in quest of *finding* home (again, the locus of our desire), and it is the *finding* and *searching* that gives a plot to human desire and meaning of being human.

To embrace God (to inscribe oneself in *le Nom/Non du Père*) is to embrace the symbolic *jouissance* par excellence. To find home with God as, in Lacanian terms, humankind’s ultimate FOther and master signifier in narrative is one significant way to approximate *jouissance* as such. Yet, God is long gone in our (post-)modern consciousness. Where else then can we find or even situate home (as the locus of human desire)? What other kinds of *jouissances* have we embraced, besides the symbolic *jouissance*? As Lukács observes in *The Theory of the Novel*, the form of the epic (or epic narrative) can no longer accommodate the modern subject’s experience of a universe where God is absent, even dead. The absence and death of God has not only altered the modern subject’s consciousness, the landscape of his/her existential being and meaning, but birthed the form of the novel to boot. What I wish to strike home as my concluding remark of this project is, echoing and adding to Lukács’ observation, *a transition in narrative from embracing the symbolic or phallic jouissance to the other jouissances* (e.g., the *jouissances* of the real, the imaginary, and the Other), and this embrace is manifest in narrative plot and plotting, including the emplotment of narrative ends. (Note: as shown in Chapter 3 and briefly stated in Chapter 4, here I want to clarify and

emphasize again that *jouissance*, of whichever kind, may be manifest in the overall plot and plotting, *not just* at narrative ends. That is to say, a certain plot orientation in a given narrative may deliver or carry with it a certain *jouissance*. On this, the reader may refer back to my discussion in Chapter 3. What I attempted with Chapter 4, on the other hand, was an investigation of possible end-*jouissances* that dominate or triumph in the supposedly concluding parts of narratives.)

[1]

A Transition of *Jouissances* in Narrative

To recapture Lukács in Lacanian terms, the epic form or epic narrative aims at producing or (re)presenting the human subject as a unified whole, anchored in and meanwhile fulfilling communal, national(istic), and/or Christian goals and discourses. Epic narratives (generally speaking) are monologic narratives whose plot exertions orient toward *the symbolic* and support (the triumph of) the discourses of the Master and of the University and whose narrative ends embrace the *jouissance* of the symbolic, the *jouissance* of (en)closure. To Bakhtin, the epic discourse is most ideologically centripetal. Nevertheless, for the survival of humankind or the consolidation of human society and civilization, such narrative discursive practices are needed at given moments in human history. Even in postmodern times, we are still swamped with so-called national plots in print and cinematic narratives which look back to the epic discourse, consolidation of the symbolic order, and obtainment of the symbolic or phallic *jouissance*.

The rise of the novel saw a spawning and burgeoning of other plot discourses, orientations, and (end-) *jouissances*. As Lukács puts it, the novel enables humankind to cope with its distance from God, who existed in the epic past, as well as with the dialectic

between the individual-hero's ideal and reality. On the psychical level, the novelistic narrative enables the human subject to pronounce or grapple with his/her melancholy and desire for *a return to or of the real* (here, again, with Lukács' argument being apprehended in Lacanian parlance). What novelistic narratives strive for is the subject's (re)questing or finding "home." In Lukács' own words, "there is a nostalgia of the soul when the longing for home is so violent that the soul must, with blind impetuosity, take the first path that seems to lead there; and so powerful is this yearning that it can always pursue its road to the end. For such a soul, every road leads to the essence—leads home—for to this soul its selfhood is its home" [Italics original] (87). Narrative plotting, then, becomes the means through which fictive heroes/heroines, writers, and readers alike negotiate what they can or cannot find, particularly at a given narrative end. For Lukács, however, the soul will not triumph over an enclosing and crushing reality (the Lacanian real can never be attained). As Lukács argues, the irony intrinsic to and immanent in the form of the novel resides in the fact that the individual-hero can never stop desiring and reaching out for an attainment of his ideal against all odds yet in the end can never triumph over sordid reality. Namely, the hero (or, in Lukács' term, the soul) can never realize his heart's desire yet at the same time can never cease being a *desiring* subject, either:

Indeed, the irony is a double one in both directions. It extends not only to the profound hopelessness of the struggle but also to the still more profound hopelessness of its abandonment—the pitiful failure of the intention to adapt to a world which is a stranger to ideals, to abandon the unreal ideality of the soul for the sake of achieving mastery over reality. And whilst irony depicts reality as victorious, it reveals not only that reality is as nothing in face of its defeated opponent, not only that the victory of reality can never be a final one, that it will always, again and again, be challenged by new rebellions of the idea, but also that

reality owes its advantage not so much to its own strength, which is too crude and directionless to maintain the advantage, as to the inner (although necessary) problematic of the soul weighed down by its ideals. (85-6)

My own argument differs from Lukács' in that, as I posited in the earlier chapters, narrative is one artistic form with/in which the *jouissance* of the real *can* be appropriated. For such narratives as Jane Austen's, the real *jouissance* is replaced by or transposed onto the *jouissance* of the symbolic: namely, heroes and heroines are able to find "home" or symbolic union (wholeness) in the form of promising marriages within the symbolic chain of order and meaning at Austen's narrative ends. Such narratives enable the author and the reader alike to experience the *jouissance* of the real *by proxy*—by proxy not only of fictionality but also of the *jouissance* of the symbolic. That is to say, symbolic unions at such narrative ends are metonymic ways in which we experience and appropriate non-separation or wholeness in the real. Hence, the desire to experience the real *jouissance by proxy* may be able to explain our desire for "closure" or a "happy ending," especially when desire as such is much frustrated or delimited in the narrative middle. In such other narratives as *Wuthering Heights*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and even *King Lear*, the real is and can be attained in and through death at narrative ends. In death there is oneness, and in such narratives the reader can also *read for the real*. Only, in the latter cases (i.e., narrative ends that embrace the real *jouissance* in death without any vicarious symbolic union and symbolic *jouissance*), our distance from the real is greater because texts as such make us realize, sometimes too poignantly, the fact that there is in truth no place for the real to exist within the symbolic order, except outside of it, as in death (and in the construction of fictionality). Such narratives proffer both satisfactory enjoyment of a wish-fulfillment and painful recognition of the human condition. In such narratives, the human subject's hope for a return to or of the real is

not completely lost; rather, it is mapped onto a different dimension, a different level, hence a different kind of human and narrative jouissance.

Granted, not all narratives satisfy our desire for (reading or writing about) the real. Neither do all of us desire or wish for a return to/of the real, to begin with. When not directed at achieving and embracing either the symbolic or the real jouissance, the gaze of narrative can turn inward towards looking into the human subject's relation to his or her imaginary other(s)—his or her (warring) selves morphed into some specular others or imagos. Indeed, since the 19th century we have had more and more narratives whose gazes are directed inward at exploring the human subject's imaginary relations unbound by, if not at the same time transgressing, symbolic law and order.

As discussed in Chapter 4, we see this (what I would call) “other-directed” plot discourse and orientation in a good many of Edgar Allan Poe's grotesque and arabesque stories (e.g., “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” “William Wilson,” and the like). The small, un-capitalized “other” as in my designation of “other-directed” refers to the *imaginary* other and the *imaginary* psychical realm. Such “other-directed” plot discourse and orientation can also be found, for example, in Melville's *Moby Dick*, particularly the plot that concerns Captain Ahab's imaginary relation to the great whale; in Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, i.e., the imaginary matrix that involves Dorian, Basil Hallward the artist, Lord Henry Wotton the locus of influence, Sibyl Vane the fiancée, and, not to mention, the picture itself; and in Christopher Priest's award-winning novel *The Prestige* (1995), especially in terms of the nearly life-long rivalrous relationship between two Victorian illusionists (or stage magicians), Alfred Borden and Rupert Angier. (I assume my readers are familiar with Melville's and Wilde's texts; plus,

due to limited space, I will here briefly discuss Priest's novel only as my last example of "other-directed" narratives in relation to the imaginary jouissance).

The world of magic, together with its on- and off-stage performance, is organized around secrecy. How to deliver successfully convincing magical illusions is all methodology, and how to make (re)appear an absent or disappeared object, a.k.a. the prestige, is and remains the performer's sole enjoyment and knowledge. For both Alfred Borden and Rupert Angier, however, such enjoyment and knowledge are never enough; each is dying to outrival the other not simply on the grounds of professional competition and perfection, but, even more significantly, owing to a burning desire to take the other's enjoyment and knowledge of the prestige for one's own. This *imaginary* engagement with the other who may, as one fears for oneself, possess more knowledge and enjoyment and hence appear more powerful and fearsome leads to decades of rancor, feud, and irreversible injuries in both Borden's and Angier's lives. Finally, due to Borden's unplanned backstage intervention with the on-going operation of Angier's version of "The New Transported Man," the apparatus splits the Great Danton into two beings: Angier and, quite literally, Angier's specular other (the former retains his bodily materiality, whereas the latter exists without as a ghost, a wraith). In the end, Angier's specular being survives not only his nemesis, Alfred Borden, but also his very material primal self. It is Angier the specular other that enjoys defying death yet meanwhile suffers the pain of forever lingering, alone, in the *imaginary* realm without any possible material anchorage within the symbolic order. Towards the end of the novel, the specular Angier acknowledges with a pathos of his own:

I have no practical being. I cannot live except in squalid half life. I cannot travel safely without either assuming an unconvincing disguise, or scaring people half to death and putting myself in peril. My only expectation of life is as a ghost of

myself, forever hovering on the fringes of my family's real lives, forever haunting my own past and their future. (344)

Such narratives as *The Prestige* and those mentioned above orient us toward an engagement with and (hopefully) retrospective examination of our imaginary relations, identifications, and resulting aggression and imaginary jouissance. As shown in these narratives, imaginary jouissance can close us in a paralytic, claustrophobic, and often, in the end (as well as in the narrative end), self-destructive enclosure or homeless exile.

Humankind has indeed journeyed far and beyond the narrative *and* psychical terrains of the symbolic or phallic jouissance. While ostensibly we are not yet completely done with it (and I do not think we will ever be because even the symbolic or phallic jouissance has something to offer humanity), we have embraced the other jouissances in and by means of narrative and narrativity, including emplotment per se. From the symbolic jouissance we have traversed to the jouissances of the real and the imaginary, and from the phallic jouissance to the jouissance of the Other. Those narratives that escape or even consciously deny symbolic or phallic (en)closure manifest, most often, an acute awareness or understanding not only of a (loop)hole in the symbolic order, its discourse and signifying chain of meaning, but lack in our all-too-human existence to boot. Such narratives speak, if not most cogently, to the un-close-ability of human desire as well as the un-signifiability (at least not wholly) of meaning, especially considering how postmodernism has contributed to our apprehension of the insufficiency and indeterminacy of language itself. Having poked holes in language and meaning, postmodernism has revolutionized our understanding of human existence in relation to language and meaning and thereby enabled other narrative jouissances to come than the phallic or symbolic jouissance; it has allowed us to imagine and traverse beyond linguistic, existential, and narrative (en)closures. Thus, as I remarked earlier, narrative

on the whole has witnessed a transition from the symbolic or phallic jouissance to the other jouissances, accompanying the historico-literary movements from classicism (or traditionalism) to modernism and postmodernism. Narrative, on the whole, has testified to and helped yield a difference as well as transition in enjoyments.

But, on top (if not also at the bottom) of all things, it is the death of God in humankind's (post-)modern consciousness that sends the human subject on endless journeys or exiles in search of home and existential meaning, if there is still any. In a world where God no longer exists as the presiding master signifier and the chain of Providential order and meaning ceases to rule, Everyman is denied his Divine Comedy at the journey's end, along with the symbolic jouissance whose obtainment is made available by this earlier godly vision. Instead of more Divine Comedies, our postmodern times have yielded narratives such as Cormac McCarthy's Pulitzer-prize-winning novel *The Road* (2006). For us McCarthy depicts a post-apocalyptic world that is "[b]arren, silent, godless" (4). The nameless heroes, a father and his son, have at the narrative beginning survived an un-named catastrophe that destroyed civilization, humanity, and almost all lives on Earth. The narrative middle records their arduous journey to the South for refuge and bears witness to the horrendous deeds of men (e.g., robbery, theft, killing, and cannibalism) done in order to fight against one another for their own freedom to desire life and ensure survival. God, with His disappearance, has left humanity to rot, suffer, and die, and all is senseless darkness, nothingness, and arbitrariness (without God the ultimate *Arbeiter*). In this chaotic universe, there is no such thing as symbolic (en)closure because the symbolic order itself has disintegrated, together with law, language, and signification. "Every day is a lie," as the father says to himself (238), for every day he has to reassure his boy that everything is and will be "okay," while the truth is that he himself is dying from day to day and nourishes no hope

of a better tomorrow for humankind. Indeed, the more that is said (between the father and the son in the novel), the more there are glaring holes in language and meaning. (It is hence no coincidence that McCarthy keeps dialogues in the novel to their minimum.) Despite the insufficiency of language, the father takes care that his son should remain and survive as a *desiring subject*. If language is used at all, it is used by the father to keep his son as such. Without desire, the human subject will perish even faster, and the boy would not have any chance of growing into manhood and future survival. In the end the father dies, but, before his final moment arrives, he asks the boy to keep going on and never give up, “[y]ou have to carry the fire [within]” (269-70). The novel ends with the death of the father and the son’s meeting and traveling with another surviving family (which consists of a father, mother, daughter, and son). McCarthy’s narrative end has it that humankind’s journey will go on, and, while symbolic (en)closure and the symbolic jouissance are both denied, “good” human beings are still able to join forces and continue existing and supporting one another as desiring subjects to evade enclosure in death and subsist on the jouissance of the Other.

True, with God pronounced dead, we are left homeless—we can no longer find home with God as the desirable FOther. We need to journey—to find home and our existential meaning elsewhere (both of which may or may not be found again). Notwithstanding, with paradise lost, we gain in return the pleasure-in-pain of escaping symbolic enclosure and challenging (as well as demolishing) the discourses of the Master and the University (such, for instance, is the Other’s jouissance of Milton’s Lucifer). Unless humankind could thoroughly give up finding home and its existential meaning, it is precisely the hole in *being* that sustains us as desiring subjects. It is the (linguistic as well as existential) hole that keeps desire alive and the human (p)lot still in the making. And, indeed, we, in

tandem with our narratives, have looked elsewhere other than the terrain of the symbolic jouissance to name our enjoyment and human suffering.

[II]

Desire for Freedom to Desire

Like Peter Brooks, I believe in the interconnectedness between textual and psychic dynamics and use a psychoanalytic framework to theorize about the workings of narrative plot. I understand that, in choosing Lacanian theory, I run the risk of complicating the vocabulary we have had, up to now, in discoursing about narrative in general and plot in particular. While I do not intend to burden the minds of my readers, I do wish that my readers could emerge out of their engagement with this project with a recognition of the intrinsic complexity and further narratability of narrative plot per se. In other words, I do not wish to see that the study of plot ends too complacently with Freud's masterplot (again, I am referring to Brooks' project). A fully developed narrative plot is just like a fully developed fictional character with its own focalizer(s), discourse(s), desire(s), anxiety (anxieties), and a destiny it desires to attain. Most of all, a fully fleshed-out plot bespeaks the exertion of a desire for freedom to desire.

Some of my readers who have read or heard of this project find that my phrasing, "desire for freedom to desire," problematic. This is how I have responded and will continue replying: the beginning of a given narrative plot concerns desire (and, of course, as Chapter 2 has argued, a narrative beginning may reveal or embed anxiety as well). Because of lack, desire is born in the human subject. Likewise, narrative beginning kicks off thanks to a working desire or desire in motion premised upon absence or lack. The narrative middle concerns "freedom"—how desire in narrative is fought for or sought after. Again, Chapter 2 has given an example of the significance of the narrative actant

“villain” (in Propp’s term) or “Opponent” (in A.-J. Greimas’). I argued in that chapter that desire in narrative is delayed and yet meanwhile sustained, if not intensified, by this narrative actant. The narrative middle is the space wherein characters (as well as readers and writers alike) master or fail to master the anxiety over a frustrated or delimited desire for freedom to desire, owing to the presence (sometimes omnipresence) and exertions of the aforementioned actant. The narrative middle is also the space where characters (as well as writers and readers) negotiate their distance from or proximity to the o/Other. After the trajectory of the middle where desire for freedom is fought out, plot reaches its end, however justified. Here at a given narrative end, we encounter the ultimate question of desire again—whether or not desire is realized, satisfied, or attained, in what form, on what level, and with what textual and psychical affects. In having introduced Lacanian terms, I hope that we are now provided with more vocabulary and a different theoretical framework with which to understand the nature, orientation, affectivity, and resolution (or irresolution) of desire in narrative and the workings of plot. Such is the relationship among narrative beginnings (desire), middles (freedom), and ends (desire). Such, as I have argued throughout this project, is the underpinning logic and drive of narrative on the whole and, in particular, of plot.

Again, all my theorization about plot in this project is done with a hope to keep us within sight of the significance of narrative plot and plotting, even in postmodern times. Instead of claiming the death of (the significance of) plot, I wish to rescue narrative plot from being taken for granted or dismissed too easily. If indeed we agree on the interconnectedness between narrative and psychical dynamics, then the meaning of plot is something we cannot overlook, ignore, dismiss, or exhaust yet. Cultural masterplots (still abundant), for instance, reflect more than the “taste” of the mass or the market demand of the general public. They unveil what a given culture or society desires (or

does not desire) the most, together with the ways in which its desire(s) could be (or, on some occasions, could have been) satisfied, fulfilled, frustrated, or delimited. They manifest certain repeated discursive configurations that help shape cultural consciousness and meanwhile disclose the cultural unconscious. The same can be said about epochal masterplots—plots that dominate a particular epoch or age and thereby reveal the epochal unconscious. Indeed, the term “masterplot” ought not to be conceptualized in a derogative manner. On the contrary, masterplots are rich warehouses wherein cultural or epochal lacks are registered and such desires stored. They help unveil a given culture’s or age’s neurotic mode of reading and desiring, mourning and returning.¹³⁵

For instance, Ralph Waldo Emerson’s and Henry David Thoreau’s transcendentalist writings manifest a “masterplot” that unveils an epochal unconscious desire for returning *to the real*. It is a masterplot that drives toward the soul’s finding home with Nature (or the mystical cosmos), achieving wholeness or a non-split state of being, and thereby obtaining the real *jouissance*. It aims at that enjoyment which transcends the soul- and intellect-dulling symbolization and unification, together with the imprisoning symbolic enclosure, of 19th century Protestantism. Nature in the transcendentalist masterplot can be said to function within the Analyst’s discourse which, unlike human symbolic dictates, remains opaque, mysterious, half-said, and invites exploration. In exploring, embracing, and dialoguing with Nature functioning as such, the human subject finds newly yielded self-knowledge and his/her own vision of truth that is not handed down by tradition upheld by the University’s discourse or by the (Protestant) masters themselves. In the transcendentalist masterplot, Nature becomes or exists as

¹³⁵ See Chapter 2, section v, for my hypothesis of the three modes of reading, including the neurotic’s mode.

the desired and pre-symbolized other, as objet petit a, with which the human soul finds home, oneness, and redemptive peace. To find home with Nature as such is to approximate the real jouissance by proxy. It may well be (understood as) a mystical or idealist “masterplot,” but, at bottom, it is a plot in which the human subject works out and reconfigures his/her relation to the cut by the symbolic and to lack. It points to mysticism/idealism for the sake of (returning to) the real.

Poet Laureate Lord Alfred Tennyson’s 1850 poem *In Memoriam A. H. H.*, for another instance, epitomizes the Victorian epochal unconscious desire for a return to the real. The poem captures and predicates on loss and mourning that were not only Tennyson’s own (the poet lost his Cambridge friend and “soul mate” Arthur Henry Hallam in 1833) but also those of the age itself. It is a poem which Queen Victoria, after losing Prince Albert to typhoid fever in 1861 and launching her reign into a fifteen-year-long mourning, found endearing to her heart. Deaths, losses, and mourning abound in Victorian literature, and Tennyson was able to articulate an epochal masterplot which voices a desired return to oneness or non-separation with the beloved Other. More, God was disappearing in the narrative world of *In Memoriam*, as well as in the Victorian socio-cultural reality, wherein evolutionary scientific theory and materialist discourse took hold. On the one hand, the poet/narrator functions within the Hysteric’s discourse, questioning the Divine purpose, design, His Master’s discourse and, to top it all, His very existence per se. On the other hand, the poem betrays a personal in tandem with an epochal anxiety over the utter disappearance of God (and, along with it, the dissolution and morality of the human soul). In the poem, desire, again both on the personal and on the collective levels, is double-folded: prompted by anxiety, it is a desire for not being separated from the real and for seeing that the symbolic order, together with its signifying chain of order and meaning, does not disintegrate with the disappearance of

God. In other words, *In Memoriam* registers a Victorian masterplot which looks to a coexistence of the *real* and *symbolic* jouissances. It records the epochal wish for consolidation of the symbolic (Victorian) order and at the same time mourning of its hole(s). And such a masterplot, driven by this double-folded desire located on more than one psychical plane, yields one of the greatest poetics of affective aestheticism: it is union married to loss, separation, and gulf; hope faced with anxiety, fear, and doubt; and, ultimately, pleasure commingled with pain.¹³⁶

Investigations into cultural or epochal masterplots, particularly on the psychical level, can, of course, continue on. But let me last posit here (for possibilities of future inquiry) that the discourses of the Hysteric and the Analyst tend to dominate the plot discourses of postmodern narratives (albeit never exclusively as shown in this project) more than those of the Master and the University. In truth, no longer does our postmodern consciousness entertain such illusion as the wholeness of our symbolized existence and human condition. We recognize too well that the master functioning within the Master's discourse and upheld by the discourse of the University has his own faults, pretenses, and splits. We refuse to yield our knowledge and enjoyment to him, and we do not trust that the symbolic signifying chain of order, meaning, and truth is everything (Foucault and Derrida let us know that there is always slippage somewhere). Accordingly, postmodern narratives show that the postmodern epochal unconscious desires (a return to) the jouissance of the Other (for instance) more than the symbolic jouissance and seeks (a return of) the master signifier that each and every individual human subject alone—not the author, the artist, the locus of the symbolic order, and definitely not God—could hopefully find, produce, or simply name for him-/herself through a

¹³⁶ *In Memoriam* uses its narrative middle and poetic rhythm to keep calling back, circling around, and getting to the lost and dead yet beloved Other—this bespeaks the pleasure of Tennyson's mourning text. Yet, like Poe's poem "The Raven," *In Memoriam* cannot and will not be able to do away with "nevermore."

dialectization, and even traversivity, of desire. This obtainment of the master signifier (which can be the real, death, truth, primal trauma, spiritual redemption, or the like) is what narratives—by way of their plot discourses, orientations, and (end-)jouissances—can help us achieve par excellence. Indeed, we (even narratologists) have not exhausted the intention of plot and desire in narrative.

The abiding question concerning narrative, plot, and plotting remain: in addition to the existent “types” of plot (e.g., the adventure plot, the treasure-seeking plot, the picaresque plot, the Bildungsroman plot, the romance plot, the marriage plot, the entailment (inheritance) plot, the detective plot, the national plot, the colonial or anti-colonial plot, the utopic/dystopic plot, the futuristic plot, etc.), can we, in the 21st century, come up with *new* kinds of narrative plot and plotting to address and (re)present the human condition and experience? Can we imagine *new* ways of narrative emplotment that can further help unveil the relation between textual and psychological dynamics? At this point, I will have to leave such inquiries to those who are interested in pursuing them in the (near) future. However, what I would like to briefly mention here and discuss in the last section of this project is the undeniable fact that science and technology of the 21st century have plotted their way into a significant part of our contemporary narrative imagination—of possible worlds and the human condition.

[III]

Today’s Narrative Imagination in Science Fantasy

By no means is the literary and cinematic genre of science fantasy (as in science fiction and sci-fi movies) a new or recent one (albeit the latter is, still, relatively more “recent” than the former). We all know that the first fully realized science fiction went as far back as to Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), and the genre of sci-fi film began to be on the

rise since the 1920s. As Mark Bould notes, “[t]he 1920s saw an increasing number of movies and serials featuring mad scientists,” and, as the last century marched on, “[t]he 1950s witnessed a sf movie boom centered in the USA, although a significant number of movies were also made in Europe, Asia and latin America” (“Film and Television” 81, 85). Not to mention the 1970s and the 1980s when George Lucas launched his phenomenal *Star Wars* (with the first movie of what soon became a series being released in 1977 and the production of the sequels continuing to this century), and Steven Spielberg brought us into “close encounters” with the memorable E. T. (1982). Meanwhile, academics and academic journals began to take the study of sci-fi works in print and in film a lot more seriously than prior to the 1970s (see Damien Broderick’s article “New Wave and Backwash: 1960-1980”; James and Mendlesohn, eds., 48-63). Plus, since the second half of the last century, the genre of science fiction has grown into a plurality of sub-genres, with new races of cyborgs, androids, gynoids, and mutants joining the sci-fi antecedents of machines, robots, and aliens as the political, socio-cultural, and psychological o/Other to the human race. As Farah Mendlesohn emphasizes, the genre of science fiction is still in the making in this new century (see his “Introduction: Reading Science Fiction” to *The Cambridge Introduction to Science Fiction*, 1-12). Given the variety of science fantasy, I will limit my following discussion to a couple of sci-fi works that engage human vis-à-vis machine or artificial beings.

The already fastened knot between science and narrative (and narrativity) is even more tightly tied in our present time, thanks to the day-to-day progress and discoveries of the sciences and technologies in the real world. Real-life scientific experiments and technological frontiers have fueled narrative imagination, and the genre of sci-fi narrative has engaged and further plotted their consequences and repercussions. As Gwyneth Jones summarily puts it:

In the real world medical technology is now creating cyborgs—human beings entirely dependent on machine parts inserted into their bodies. In vitro fertilization techniques have blurred the line between children created ‘naturally’, and children made to order; while the full humanity (or otherwise) of cloned human babies is a matter of serious debates. In sf [sci-fi] these situations have been examined and re-examined. (“The Icons of Science Fiction” 167)

This union among science, technology, and narrativity has fostered in both literary and cinematic narratives a dialectic and dialogue between human and machine, or, between the organic and the synthetic, as well as that which, hypothetically or virtually, exists in between. (Note: for lack of an all-encompassing term and unless otherwise specified, I will use the term “machine(s)” here and below in a broad manner, which may include or refer to robot, android, cyborg, and the like.) Even narrative inquiries into the self-other imaginary cathexis as embedded in “other-directed” plot discourses have been mapped onto the level of human vis-à-vis machine (or the like). That which is mechanical or artificial (or the like) has become the specular other of the human subject, upon which s/he projects a more ideal self that appears more powerful and enjoys more. And, vice versa: the human exists as the more desirable specular other for that which is mechanical or artificial. Either case is likely to give rise to an *imaginary* plot orientation in which one—human or machine—vies with the specular other for repossession of the latter’s enjoyment, power, and/or knowledge so that one can appropriate them for and as one’s own. Self-other comparison and rivalry—now between human and machine—can yield aggressive competition, if not further oppression or persecution of the other race. This new self-other relational axis marks one example of how today’s science fantasy has reshaped the psychical terrains of narrative hand in hand with plot discourses. Indeed, far from being the terminators, science and technology have kept narrativity alive and narrative plot *still in the making*.

By dint of new emplotments and dialogic imaginations, humankind has created machines, robots, and artificial beings with machine or artificial intelligence to serve the discourse and purpose of the human Other as master. Take iconic science fiction writer Isaac Asimov's famous (if not also ironic) fashioning of the Three Laws of Robotics, for instance: "1. A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. 2. A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law. 3. A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law" (see the opening of his 1976 novella *The Bicentennial Man*). Despite that machines and robots (or the like) are desired and even decreed by the human Other to serve as instruments and, worse, slaves, they remain fearful others in the human imagination. Their machine or artificial intelligence may be frightening in terms of its almost faultless (error-free) mental capacity, which further mobilizes and empowers the mechanical or artificial body with prowess. But what takes on a life of its own and spins out of humankind's control is desire in machines, robots, or other kinds of artificial and hybrid beings. In other words, I would like to argue that what really causes anxiety in the human Other is not so much the power of the artificial mind and body as the self-assertive force of machine's human-like desire that appropriates, equals, or even overpowers and combats humankind's own. From the emplotments of past and contemporary science fictions we find out furthermore that even robots, androids, and/or cyborgs have stories of their own and tales they desire to tell, together with the jouissances and/or master signifiers they wish to seek and obtain. They, like humans, desire the freedom to desire (Shelley's/Frankenstein's Monster serves as a prime example). Again like humans, they would discover or realize that their desire as such is delimited. Still, they would strive to exist or remain as *desiring subjects* none the less—and this is anxiety-provoking to humans.

Let us go back to Asimov's novella *The Bicentennial Man*. It has been said that the Russian-born American writer and professor of biochemistry perfects the sci-fi race of *good robots* in his narratives (refer, for instance, to Gwyneth Jones' article). His robot Andrew Martin is quite an exemplar: he serves a human household, respects his human masters, and faithfully observes the Three Laws of Robotics. However, after reading and digesting the books in the master Sir's library, Andrew Martin begins to have his own ideas (here we can hear an echo of the formative experience of reading in Shelley's *Monster*). Books and reading are the *objets petit a* that cause the robot to desire: he desires first to become a *free* robot and, ultimately, a symbolized human subject *de jure*—one that is legally inscribed within humankind's symbolic order and signification. If there is any "transgression" in Andrew Martin the robot, it is his adamant desire for having his *humanity* recognized by the human Other, particularly by the human language and law.

A legalized humanity and subjecthood is the master signifier the robot seeks to obtain. Albeit a robot, Andrew Martin is and exists as a *desiring subject* (after being enlightened by his reading), and his desire is that which drives the life force of the narrative. Intriguingly, Andrew Martin himself contemplates for some while on giving birth to an unprecedented book project about the hi/story of robots; though the project is never completed, the robot illustrates a curious desire for narrativity (which could indeed be used as a proof of his humanity, for narrativity is one distinctive human trait and activity). Having begun his operative existence as a human household serving robot/tool, Andrew Martin, however, does not uphold the human Other's discourse of the Master for long. According to Asimov's narrative design, it is a robot's desire that dialectizes the human Other's distrustful, sometimes blatantly hostile, attitude toward the robot species that serves humans and thereby pokes holes in their discourse of the Master. Not only

does Andrew Martin manifest a most human desire for freedom to desire (and Asimov's emplotment does include an episode in which the robot attempts at using the money he has earned through his production of artistic works to buy his, a robot's, freedom from the human master of the house). But in pushing for the obtainment of his own symbolic *jouissance*, Andrew Martin also helps reform the human law regarding the robot race and secures other robots' freedom against human malice and persecution (such as to order robots to dismember themselves). Because of him, a new unprecedented human law is passed to protect the robots' right to life (so long as it does not violate the same right of human beings). It is hence illustrative in Asimov's narrative of the fact that one desires freedom in order to desire more and further—the robot needs to have his freedom first before he can desire further and obtain the master signifier he seeks.

After almost a lifetime's struggle to become a symbolized human subject *de jure*, Andrew Martin is granted his humanity in human legal terms and therewith his symbolic *jouissance* at the narrative end. On the bicentennial anniversary day of his existence, Andrew Martin is officially declared a Bicentennial Man by the World President. Yet, he has paid a price for having his heart's desire—he lets his positronic machine brain be operated on and altered in such a way that he will and does eventually die. As he once told congresswoman Li-Hsing:

My own positronic pathways have lasted nearly two centuries without perceptible change and can last for centuries more. Isn't *that* the fundamental barrier? Human beings can tolerate an immortal robot, for it doesn't matter how long a machine lasts. They cannot tolerate an immortal human being, since their own mortality is endurable only so long as it is universal. And for that reason they won't make me a human being. (178)

It is not difficult for the reader to find Lacan's dictum—one's desire is the desire of the Other—resonating in Andrew Martin's being. Not only does the robot desire the human

Other, but he also desires *according to the latter's desire and law*. As Lacan further tells us, one can never desire with unrestrained freedom, for one's desire is inscribed in the desire and law of the Other (that is, if one wishes to reside in the symbolic order). And the human Other cannot desire an immortal robot, however much humanized in body and mind. To be human is to inhabit, if not meanwhile endure, the human condition. To have one's humanity is to suffer death (mortality) and, on top it all, to have his/her desire for freedom to desire—(de)limited. Nevertheless, for Andrew Martin the Bicentennial Man, it is a most pleasurable suffering. It is his *jouissance*.

Asimov's "good" robot is able to realize his desire (albeit delimited) through a series of gradual human law reform and institutionalization. But let us not forget that desire in machine—in Andrew Martin's case, a robot—does cause great anxiety in the human Other even in Asimov's narrative, particularly the human legislative body. As proposed earlier, desire in machines or artificial beings is anxiety-provoking to humankind; it brings the human subject face to face with the desire of/in the Other, which is in science fantasy projected onto the mechanical or artificial being. *What does machine (or the machine Other) want?* It is much like desire in woman as Other has caused anxiety in man (take Freud, for instance) within the gender context: *Was will das Weib (what does woman want)?* Thus, even in science fantasy, human beings are brought to wrestle with the Other who/which desires, and (as humankind imagines) the mechanical or artificial being desires no less—it desires no less freedom to desire. Its desire as such is no less powerful and no less threatening than human desire *per se*.

That machine or the mechanical Other evolves, develops, and desires to obtain a master signifier (and enjoyment) of its own—rather than mechanically function according to the human signifying chain of order and meaning—is a menacing thought. If such a powerful desire in the machine or robot race (or the like) is downright

suppressed, oppressed, or denied by, say, the human species as the locus of the symbolic order, it then yields an emplotment that can anticipate an outbreak of machine or robot (or the like) rebellion (ranging from Ridley Scott's 1982 classic *Blade Runner* to Alex Proyas' 2004 sci-fi crime thriller *I, Robot*). The reverse—when *human* desire as such is suppressed or oppressed by machines or robots (or the like) as the locus of the symbolic order—gives rise to humankind's revolt (as in the Wachowski Brothers' *The Matrix* and its sequels¹³⁷). The narrative emplotment in either case predicates on the anxiety-provoking omnipresence of the Other that *seems not lacking*, along with the all-seeing surveillance and control of the symbolic order—even in virtuality—which (over-)monitors and checks the (machine or human) subjects' desire for freedom to desire. As shown in the earlier chapters, the absence (or disappearance) of the Other causes and sustains desire, whereas the Other's omnipresence at one's back (and appearance of non-lack) triggers anxiety instead. In this light, narratives are ways in/through which we measure, negotiate, or reconfigure our distance from (or proximity to) the Other. Albeit latched onto possible futuristic or virtual worlds that concern human and machine (or the like), such narratives still further unveils our—humans'—anxiety over the locus and gaze of the symbolic order as that which is omnipresent and never lacking, together with symbolic enclosure. In truth, the paradox of the digital age is that it has not given us more doses of freedom; instead, not only are we now more bound to machines, but we are also, if not further, conditioned in our ways to desire—as well as to fear. Our pleasure of accessing the Internet and the digital world beyond bounds of time and space is indeed commingled with a painful anxiety that others may access our own (web and interior) space equally without limits. This commingled enjoyment bespeaks our *digital jouissance*. Our fear that someone else may be watching grows with this (boundary-

¹³⁷ In *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out* (first edition published in 1992 and second edition in 2001), Slavoj Žižek writes quite extensively on Larry Wachowski's *The Matrix* (see particularly the last chapter in the book, 213-31). In addition to one's relation to the big Other, Žižek delves into the relationship between reality and illusion in the film.

crossing or boundary-transgressing) freedom we ourselves enjoy. And those sci-fi narratives as suggested above capture our innate fear of an Other always looming at our back whose omnipresence and surveillance are now even more entrenched in our lives with the aid of science and technology. Consequently, such sci-fi narratives reinforce our human desire for freedom to desire, in this case, the lack of symbolic surveillance and monitoring; they provide us the means with which we use to imagine our escape or rebellion.

It appears that when we launched into this new century, machine (or the like) has taken up the analyst's couch and managed to "hysterize" the discourse of humankind. As explained in Chapter 3, hysterization plays a key role in the dialectic between the hysteric and the analyst, between the Hysteric's discourse and the discourse of the Analyst. Hysterization enables the dialectization of the human subject's desire and helps facilitate his/her quest for and even actual finding of the master signifier. Today the dialectization (and, in the best cases, traversivity) of human desire takes place on the level between machine and human. Machine, together with machine narratives, has become the objet petit a, the rem(a)inder of the human Other, through which the (human or humanized) subject reconfigures his or her fantasy and desire. In other words, machine and machine narratives have helped keep causing, sustaining, and supporting desire in the human subject and the 21st-century tale about humanity.

Take, for example, the 2008 computer-animated science fiction film *Wall-E*. Directed and written by Andrew Stanton, *Wall-E* is as much about the titular *machine* protagonist as about the humankind that has left behind the Earth when turned into (and quite literally) a barren wasteland as a result of overwhelmingly un-recycled waste and has been in exodus in outer space for years on starliners (spaceships) which program all the

comforts and supplies of human wants and needs. In such a saturated, if not over-saturated, existence where each human being has no need to labor, work, or even walk any inch to get what s/he needs or wants, the basic human body structure has changed—it has (d)evolved into a large head followed by an obese torso with short arms and short legs. The fact that the humans in the film can hardly walk if tossed out of their comfy chairs tells not only of their physical but, more significantly, their psychical regressions: namely, they have become toddlers with their wobbling walks and a state of mind that knows only need and want, but not desire. Indeed, they cease being *desiring subjects*.

By contrast, Wall-E, a small yet handy machine built for cleaning up un-recycled human waste on Earth, appears more human than the human species in their most enjoyable yet self-oblivious escape. Albeit a machine, Wall-E has human-like qualities: he possesses and manifests emotions, reflexes, likes, fears, anxieties, longings, memories, and even nostalgias (for old movies, for instance). Plus, he *desires*. He falls in love—at first sight—with another (more highly advanced) robot, Eve, that is sent back to Earth to detect traces of organic life. If such life can be found on Earth again (and it is found later in the film in the form of a small green plant—and still growing, too), then humankind can return to Earth and live there once more under life-fostering conditions.

Though a machine, Wall-E desires companionship and love and fears separation from his beloved Other, Eve. Wall-E's desire is the desire of (Eve as) the Other. When he presents the green plant to Eve (to please her), Eve's implanted signal system is turned on, and she is taken (signaled) back into one of the master starliners where the new-found earthly life can be analyzed and studied. Separation from the beloved Other is intolerable for Wall-E. In great fear and anxiety, he follows Eve into space and into the master spaceship. There he awakens, to begin with, two human beings, John and Mary,

from their respective secluded and stupefying existence ruled by over-saturated enjoyment; he makes them want to know and befriend each other. Equally, if not more, important, Wall-E awakens McCrea, the commander-in-chief, from a similar state of being and prompts him to become curious about the Earth and, to top it all, desire a long-due return to her.

In the film, Wall-E is the one (narrative agent) that keeps the green plant constantly within human sight, despite the other programmed machines' design to make it disappear or have it destroyed altogether. Like the green plant, Wall-E himself is, for the humans, a rem(a)inder of the Earth as the ultimate Other. Nevertheless, it is owing to Wall-E that Mother Earth becomes the *desirable* Other for humankind; it is he, a machine as the objet petit a, that causes, sustains, and supports desire (for Mother Earth) in the human subjects. Wall-E as the objet petit a helps the human race reconfigure its fantasy and desire. Because of Wall-E, the humans as a whole desire to return to the Earth—they desire to find home again with the desirable Other, echoing Lukács observation of the soul's true and immanent desire. In this sense (and quite ironically), the machine rem(a)inder helps the humans regain and redeem their souls, for it is the human soul that desires and yearns. In the end they—the humans, Wall-E, and Eve—all return. The humans no longer escape but, instead, are able to embrace their anchorage within a restored, consolidated symbolic order with Mother Earth as the newly yielded (or regained) master signifier. In the end they find home on the terrain that inhabits the symbolic jouissance. True, the film may sound like a simple happy narrative without having a machine being as the hideous monster of human creation that comes back and haunts (or even destroys) humanity. Yet, it is significant to note that the film exemplifies the machine being (Wall-E) as a third term—as objet petit a—in the relation between the human self and the Other (Earth); the machine being has not only featured an

indispensible actant in today's (sci-fi) narrative emplotment, but it has also functioned as the narrative agent that (re)configures human desire in (sci-fi) narrative.

Indeed, *desire* still governs or underpins the narrative imagination of the 21st century, albeit this century is only at its beginning. Again, (as I keep reiterating throughout this project), at the beginning there is desire. Desire is one defining quality of humanity (so is narrativity). In today's narrative imagination and emplotment of science fiction, the desires of machines and artificial beings are brought into dialogue, if not at the same time dialectization, with the desire of the human subject. Inspired by British science fiction writer Brian Aldiss' short story "Supertoys Last All Summer Long" (first published in *Harper's Bazaar* in December 1969), Steven Spielberg's 2001 Sci-Fi film *A. I. (Artificial Intelligence)* foregrounds the artificial being as *desiring subject*, a motif harking back to Aldiss' original narrative.

Back in 1969 Brian Aldiss already imagined for us a possible world in some distant future time when science has progressed to the point of enabling human households in overcrowded city-blocks to enjoy "the friendly illusion of gardens set in eternal summer" where roses will always grow and grow fresh. More, science is capable of supplying the human race with intelligent and full-sized synthetic life-forms, i.e., "serving-men," to serve and satisfy the desire of humankind as master. Those "serving-men" are created and expected to operate as "slaves" as in the (Lacanian) Master's discourse, with science functioning as the discourse of the University in support of the Master's discourse. Humankind's discourse of the Master can be heard in the Managing Director of Synthank Henry Swinton's public address on the bright(er) future prospects of the human condition:

Amid all the triumphs of our civilisation—yes, and amid the crushing problems of overpopulation too—it is sad to reflect how many millions of people suffer from increasing loneliness and isolation. Our serving-man will be a boon to them; he will always answer, and the most vapid conversation cannot bore him. (Aldiss 7)

Hence, on the one hand, the discourses of the Master (Human) and the University (Science) dominate a significant part of the narrative's plot discourse and orient the tale toward the obtainment of the symbolic or phallic *jouissance*, facilitated by artificial beings and their instrumentality. In absorbing "serving-men" into human existence burdened with pressing issues such as overpopulation and at the same time increasing personal isolation and loneliness, the symbolic order of humankind can welcome further consolidation and unification (instead of falling apart, or disintegration, due to above-mentioned crises or threats).

However, Aldiss' narrative manifests that even scientific alternatives or "solutions" cannot wholly redress the problems with which humankind is faced. By the time the narrative begins, the Swintons have already had David, a robot boy and "supertoy," living in their household as a way to compensate, even end, Mrs. Swinton's loneliness. Owing to overpopulation, human reproduction is "strictly controlled," and, if a couple would like to conceive a child, they will need to win a "parenthood lottery" first. Therefore, David serves as a scientific alternative or replacement before the Swintons could win such a lottery and conceive a natural child of their own. Yet, David the robot boy does not exist in the Swinton household without emotions and desire of his own. On the contrary, the artificial being desires the human (i.e., Monica the mother) and wishes moreover that the human Other desires him in return. Unfortunately, Aldiss' story has it that the human Other is and remains unable to love back an artificial son, and David feels that he remains incapable of letting Mummy know how much he loves her.

Language fails, and there is no effective verbal communication between the two throughout the entire narrative. Besides, there is neither hysterization nor dialectization of their desires for the other party, hence no fruitful production of their master signifiers, not even (more) knowledge about oneself as well as the Other. Consequently, instead of love and intimacy, there is only an anxiety-provoking awkwardness accompanied by a poignant sense of split, a hole, between them. The fact that the artificial boy does not simply exist but desires to boot causes anxiety in himself, the human (m)Other, and the narrative itself. The gap between them is not closed even at the narrative end; rather, it becomes un-closeable when the Swintons do finally win their share of the parenthood lottery and rejoice at the new possibility of conceiving a natural and “real” child. However much David desires to be enclosed within the loop of the human Other’s desire, Aldiss’ narrative end leaves David, at best, with “a bright pink flower” he plucks from the garden and sleeps with the flower as a rem(a)inder of the beloved mOther lying on his pillow; “[i]ts beauty and softness reminded him of Mummy” (11).

However much David desires to be enclosed within the loop of Monica’s desire as well as the symbolic order which Mummy and Daddy inhabit, Aldiss’ narrative end leaves David’s place within the symbolic an uncertainty (he may be sent back to the factory as the Swintons contemplate). In whichever case, the short story *does* end not only with the Swintons’ symbolic enjoyment (a promising triadic union now enabled by their government-sanctioned biological reproduction of a natural child) but with David’s jouissance as well. It is not difficult for the reader to imagine that David will have or will continue having a sweet dream, at least for that night (the night on which the story concludes), a fragrant dream that reminds him of Mummy. It is the jouissances of the Other and the imaginary that David enjoys—and suffers—at Aldiss’ narrative end: a

multi-layered affective enjoyment that lingers outside complete symbolic inclusion or enclosure, yet not without any hope (or dream), at least not without a rem(a)inder.

In comparison, Spielberg's cinematic version may appear more generous toward David as a desiring subject (particularly regarding the end-result of David's desire, which will be discussed in due time). Like Aldiss' narrative, *A. I.* portrays David as a robot boy who desires the human mOther—yet much more avidly and relentlessly, if not also forcefully to certain degree. The psychical reality of oneness between David and Monica is established early in the film but nowhere in Aldiss' original story. I would even suggest that Spielberg's Mecha (mechanical) child undergoes a *psychotic* psychical formation and consequently possesses a psychotic psychical structure. That is to say, during David's psychical formation, he is never *alienated* from Monica as the mOther. In Chapter 3 I have introduced Bruce Fink's Lacanian formulation of the phase of *alienation* as the first stage of the human subject's psychical formation. It is a stage where the subject is supposed to be alienated from the mother by *le Nom/Non du Père* (the Name/No of the Father) and therefrom moves on to the next phase (*separation*). If, however, the subject does not experience effective paternal intervention (which is the function of the Lacanian term "Name-of-the-Father") at this first stage, s/he would remain fixated upon an un-alienated state of psychical being with the mother and develop a psychotic psychical structure. This psychotic psychical formation is what David experiences during the process in which he receives from Monica his imprinting protocol.

According to the film, in order to properly and fully "activate" the artificial being (in other words, to install, humanize, and anchor it in the human household that decides to keep it), an imprinting protocol consisted of a string of random words (of a predefined

order) should be read to the artificial being. Interestingly, the imprinting protocol Monica reads to David runs as follows: “Cirrus, Socrates, Particle, Decibel, Hurricane, Dolphin, Tulip, Monica, David, Monica.” Not only is Henry, David’s (adoptive) father, physically absent from this scene, but the word-string contains (literally) no name of the father and (psychically speaking) no Name-of-the-Father. After the protocol is instated in David, the Mecha child calls Monica “Mommy” for the first time in the film (prior to its installation, David always called Monica by her name). The un-alienated mother-child relationship between David and Monica is from that moment on established and cemented for good, particularly on David’s part. For David, he and Mommy are and ought to be a unary/unitary unit; they are part of each other, whereas Henry will always remain just Henry (and so David calls his adoptive father, before and after the protocol). This initial discussion of David’s psychical formation and structure leads to what I would like to bring up next (and discuss in greater detail later): David’s psychotic psychical structure prompts him to engage with the fairy tale of Pinocchio (read to him by Monica) in the psychotic mode of reading and comprehension. And this mode of reading in turn reconfigures the formation of David’s desire and subjecthood.

As mentioned earlier, Brian Aldiss’ short story inspired Spielberg’s film project. In fact, before Spielberg came onto the scene of turning and transforming Aldiss’ story into a motion picture, the author recalled that “[t]his was the story that greatly affected Stanley Kubrick and he was keen to make it into a movie. After some persuasion, I sold him the film rights. For some while, I worked on a possible screenplay with him” (“Foreword” vii). It was Kubrick who suggested an insertion of the story of Pinocchio into their collaborated film project, but Aldiss was not thrilled at this idea: “I could not or would not see the parallels between David, my five-year-old android, and the wooden creature who becomes human. It emerged that Stanley wished David to become human,

and wished, also to have the Blue Fairy materialise. Never consciously rewrite old fairy stories, I'd say" (Ibid. xi). Years of discussion and planning dragged on, but the project never came to fruition, and Stanley Kubrick died in 1999. Aldiss' story was then sent to Spielberg who was also deeply interested. Together they plotted further for a film version (and vision), yet, still, Aldiss did not alter his mind about having fairy tales embedded in his original tale about David the robot boy, let alone having such tales override/overwrite his own. Aldiss wanted "[n]o flooded New York, no Blue Fairy. Just an intense and powerful drama of love and intelligence" (Ibid. xviii). For Aldiss, *his* story should remain, first and last, a story "of a young boy who, whatever he does, cannot please his mother" (Ibid. vii). Somehow, *A. I.* ends up having not only a flooded New York, a Blue Fairy, but the story of Pinocchio to crown it all.

Unlike the beginning of Aldiss' original story, when the narrative of *A. I.* begins, Monica and Henry already have a biological son, Martin, who has been in a long coma and under hospital care. In a way, Martin is an absence, upon which the narrative beginning of *A. I.* predicates, much like, in this respect, the beginning of Aldiss' story that presupposes the absence of a biological child in the Swinton household. Out of absence (or insufficiency) desire is born in both narratives and narrative lives begin. However, the beginning of Spielberg's film is not only about absence but, perhaps even more significantly, also about *loss*; a healthy, lively son is lost to the couple, and Monica, the mother, is in deep mourning. Spielberg's cinematic emplotment has it, if not highlighting it as well, that the artificial being, created by science, can be utilized as an instrument to reconfigure a human being's mourning process. David, a Mecha child, should (and does) function as the new, substitutive objet petit a which re-causes and sustains the mournful mother's desire. Again, this goes back to my earlier statement concerning the role of science and scientific imagination in narrative emplotment of this

age—that machine and artificial beings have found their way into narrative plotting and therein function as a new kind of objets petit a which help the human race reconfigure its fantasy and desire.

The film does not make Martin's absence permanent, however. On one miraculous day Martin awakes from his coma and is brought back home. The Swintons' biological son does not like what he sees at home. Like Aldiss' original tale, the artificial being does not simply exist in the human household, *but he desires as well*. Spielberg's Mecha child, with his manifest desire for Monica the mother, causes anxiety and jealousy in Martin. Moreover, Martin discovers that his mother can love back an artificial being; that David the Mecha boy *is* included in the loop of the mother's desire and love. Out of anxiety, fear, and jealousy, Martin wants the assurance that the mOther does not desire the artificial being more than she desires himself, the real son. He then engages David in a self-other imaginary relationship of sibling rivalry, accompanied by a series of rivalrous contests. Besides constantly reminding David that he is and should desire no more than being a specular other, a mirror image of "someone's real kid," Martin dares Dave, for instance, to eat human food and to cut off a lock of Monica's hair while she is sleeping. The hair-cutting episode best captures the relationship between desire in the artificial being and ensuing anxiety in man. Persuaded by Martin, David believes that, if he has a lock of the mother's hair and wears it around his neck like a fairy-tale princess would do with the hair of Prince Charming, Mommy would love and desire him even more. Yet, the intense (hence, threatening) desire of the artificial being for the human (m)Other, which underlies and prompts David's hair-cutting action/scene, causes great anxiety and concern in Henry the father. David with his desiring subjectivity has to be dealt with and removed for good.

Eventually David is removed from the Swinton household in the film. But prior to his removal, there is one important detail worth picking up here: one day Martin suggests to Monica that she read the story of Pinocchio to him and David. Possibly Martin anticipates that David will soon realize that a story is after all “just a story”; namely, it is nothing but fiction, a fairy tale, that a puppet—or a Mecha child—could become *a real boy*. Very possibly Martin intends to use the story of Pinocchio to frustrate David’s desire for Mommy, but David *is* inspired by the fairy tale of Pinocchio’s transformation. What Martin (and Monica) did not expect is that David engages the tale in a psychotic mode of reading, which (as laid out in Chapter 2) recognizes no differentiation between fictionality and reality. David firmly believes that the story of Pinocchio is “true,” and the Blue Fairy, who can turn non-human objects into real boys, *really* exists; hence, what happens to Pinocchio can happen to him. There is no alienating boundaries set up between what happens in fiction and what can (or even cannot) happen in reality in David’s psychotic mode of reading and “artificial understanding,” despite his intelligence. The fairy tale (including the Blue Fairy herself who makes Pinocchio a real boy) becomes the objet petit a for David—it further causes, supports, and sustains David’s desire for the mother. If he can find the Blue Fairy and become a real boy (and, in his mind, there is a real possibility as such), then Mommy will love him—more. In this way, and despite Aldiss’ reluctance (and resistance), the film’s inclusion of the story of Pinocchio both enables David to configure his fantasy (now he knows he wants to become and indeed tries hard at becoming a real boy) and meanwhile reconfigures the jouissance awaiting David at the film’s narrative end.

Having inherited Kubrick’s vision, Spielberg turned Aldiss’ story into something more than a science fiction that examines the impact of science upon humanity. Kubrick and Spielberg reinstated the old, primeval human interest and quest in the narrative about

David as a desiring subject, human or artificial. They (predominantly Spielberg) brought David onto a journey in search of finding home again—home with the beloved Other where the achingly longing soul can find peace and ultimate solace. In this light, the film *A. I.* is not simply a recycled fairy tale about a non-human puppet or robot boy wanting to become human. It concerns, au fond, the essence of being human and that of the human condition on the psychological level. David wishes to become a real boy because he wants to be inscribed in the circuit of *human* desire, and, in having become a human-like subject after the instillation of the imprinting protocol in his being, David experiences what a human subject experiences—lack, mourning of lack, and desire for return to/of the real (non-lack). The film may have begun with Monica’s mourning (for her son, Martin), but it soon segues into David’s own mourning. The more we mourn (the loss of the beloved Other), the more we desire his/her return. Being with Monica is soon denied to David.

An unfortunate incident takes place at Martin’s birthday party: for fear that his life, albeit an artificial one, may be endangered by the other boys invited to Martin’s party (one of them, for experiment’s sake, cuts David on the arm to see if he, a Mecha, possesses the Damage Alert System like the other Mechas), David accidentally drags Martin into the swimming pool wherein Martin is nearly drowned. Once again, David the artificial being manifests his desiring subjectivity; in this episode, David desires and actively defends his freedom to live. (May I add that Spielberg’s Mecha boy violates Asimov’s Third Law of Robotics, which dictates that *a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law?* In David’s case, his self-protection transgresses the First Law, i.e., *a robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.*) This incident proves too much for Henry the father to tolerate, for the Mecha boy’s desiring

subjectivity is too anxiety-provoking. Finally persuaded, Monica resolves, with much grief, to take David back to the cybernetics center for destruction. Luckily, Monica is unable to carry through the plan, so she leaves David and Teddy in the woods (albeit another echo of fairy-tale material). Lack, or separation from the beloved Other, is then installed in David's (p)lot, and, from that moment on, the film orients David (and the spectators alike) toward an attempt at returning to the real (non-separation) and the *jouissance* of the real. In other words, lack is implanted in the cinematic narrative plot for David to mourn his loss, which, in return, sustains and further fuels his state of being a desiring subject throughout the trajectory of the film. And the journey begins.

The more we are kept from the real, the more we desire its return (that is, of course, under the premise that we do desire non-separation from the desired Other to begin with). David's return to the real is, without exception, delayed in the cinematic narrative middle. In one episode of the narrative middle, David is caught, along with a batch of robots on the run, by robot-hunters and sent to one of the "flesh fairs" where robots are publicly dismembered and destroyed for human spectators' pleasure and satisfaction. But David looks too real to suffer this horrendous fate. Intriguingly, the chief robot-hunter and show host comments that David, being a sample of the newest model, belongs to "one of those built to aspire to the human condition." Indeed, there at the flesh fair David demonstrates his aspiration for the *human* condition by insisting that he is a real boy, his name is David (the signifier of his unique identity), and that *Mommy* (a human mother) made him. More, unlike the other robots, David *pleads for his life* when his turn is up and he is placed on the stage made for public display of robot destruction. He, a Mecha boy, manifests a most human desire *for freedom to desire* (at that moment, life, but, in the long run, the return to/of the real; being alive enables his ultimate return to Mommy). When desire as such is limited, he pleads, and this speaks cogently of

David's *human* condition. Upon this display of David's desire for freedom to desire, the crowd demands in anger that the chief robot-hunter "let *the boy* go."

At the flesh fair David comes to know Joe, an adult robot designed to satisfy human sexual desire. Although they become friends (after having both survived the flesh fair), Joe contests not only the reality of the Blue Fairy, whom David seeks so indefatigably, but, more fundamentally, the Mecha boy's most stubborn aspiration for the human condition—i.e., desire for the Other. Unlike David, Joe knows too well (and too consciously) that he is and will continue existing throughout his artificial life only as a thing, a function, created by humans to satisfy human (sexual) desires and needs. Joe is proud to perform his hard-wired function, to fill the lack in humans through sexual acts, and has no aspiration for the human condition whose lack appears all too transparent, if not too pitiful as well, to him. *Like David*, Joe wants to be (and indeed works hard at being) the objet petit a—the cause and support—of human desire (in David's case, the cause and support of Monica's desire). But, *unlike David*, Joe as l'objet petit a functions as the slave in humankind's discourse of the Master, in which the slave unquestionably offers the master what he has, both his own (in Joe's case, sexual) enjoyment and (sexual) knowledge. In appropriating the slave's enjoyment and knowledge, the master is a fortified whole and is not lacking. Joe is content with his facilitating humans to achieve their sexual and symbolic/phallic jouissance (again, let us not forget the correlation I have tried to establish between the Master's discourse and the symbolic or phallic jouissance.) In short, Joe is there to serve and complete human desire as an artificial object, function, and instrument, rather than dialectize it as a desiring subject.

David as l'objet petit a, on the other hand, functions within the discourse of the Hysteric.¹³⁸ Now, David functions within the Hysteric's discourse—a discourse wherein the subject attempts at instating him-/herself in the Other as *the* cause of the Other's desire. Unlike the master's slave, the subject of the Hysteric's discourse is not interested in producing (and, de facto, refuses to produce) the Other as a non-lacking, self-sufficient whole. Rather, the subject of the Hysteric's discourse aims at opening holes in the Other so that s/he can succeed in installing him-/herself as *the* objet petit a in the Other. In other words, the subject will try hard at making the Other to desire him/her. This is what David desires and achieves to succeed—he *will* become a real boy because he *will* make Monica love him; he *will* become *the* objet petit a for the (m)Other. When Joe tries to dissuade David from going to Manhattan in search of the Blue Fairy because, as he warns the boy, humans hate robots for being too many and too smart, David shouts back his response: “My Mommy doesn't hate me because I am special and unique, because there has never been anyone like me before, ever. Mommy loves Martin because he is real, and, when I am real, Mommy is going to read to me and tuck me in my bed and sing to me and listen to what I say and she will cuddle with me and tell me every day, a hundred times a day, that she loves me!”

Despite his sincere admonishment and dissuasive efforts, Joe remains unable to reconfigure David's desire and fantasy; David does not undergo a traversivity of his desire on Joe's account, so the film still orients David (and the spectators) towards a return to the real. With Joe's help, David eventually makes his journey to New York (and, yes, a flooded one), where, as he is informed by Dr. Know (an interactive encyclopedia) in

¹³⁸ I do not forget that I have discussed David's *psychotic* psychical structure as well as his *psychotic* mode of reading; yet, considering both that Lacan did not furnish us with a “discourse of the Psychotic” and that it is not unlikely for a subject of the psychotic psychical structure to take up a communicative function or semiotic role in the Hysteric's discourse, or any of the four Lacanian discourses, I will stay with the discourse of the Hysteric for now to further illumine David's desire in relation to the Other.

Rouge City, the Blue Fairy can be found. But there in Manhattan, “the lost city in the sea at the end of the world where the lions weep,” David meets first his “real” father (Professor Hobby)—the engineer-scientist who created and now endearingly welcomes him back. But the real crisis resides in David’s spotting many other Davids who look just like him. David has always believed that he is “one of a kind”; so have humans told him, including a man he met at the flesh fair and Professor Hobby himself. Being one of a kind is of paramount importance to David: it comforts him to think that he is a “special” and “unique” being as is every individual *human*—it bespeaks part of his aspiration for the *human* condition. But, most importantly, being unique means that only he and he alone can have Monica. The sight of a room full of replicas all by the name of “David” makes his head spin. In great consternation and anger, David violently smashes another David who befriends him in Dr. Hobby’s office and cries out in the meantime, “You can’t have her. She’s mine. And I am the only one. I am David. I am David. I am David. I am special and unique. I am David. You can’t have her! I am David”

The idea that he is, after all, a robot, which is capable of being replicated *ad infinitum*, is unbearable and appears “unreal” to David. The final moment of truth strikes him when his eyes rest on “a bird with big wings [and] feathers sticking up from the bottom” (it is actually and literally a mirror image of a man-like logo statue with its stretched-out arms that is erected outside the Rockefeller building) which exists in his artificial memory as the first thing he remembers and can shed light upon his “past.” Shortly afterwards, we (spectators) see David walking among the replicas in their respective container-boxes, and then the camera eye shows us a medium close-up of David’s face expressive of the human affect caused by utter despair. He, David, is not unique and not real. In the next shot, David is shown sitting high up outside the office building, and, finally, with the word “Mommy” on his lips, David lets himself drop all the way down

into the ocean. He has not found *his* Blue Fairy in Manhattan; instead, he finds out about his artificial condition and being. He has been thrown too far off from the heavenly terrain of his dream (of finding the Blue Fairy and becoming a real boy), and now he has no desire to live. Despite that his creator-father is overtaken by joy at seeing David find his way back “home” (a word used and repeated by Dr. Hobby himself), being home with the professor and his team that had helped create David is far from arriving at the real.

While being carried along the ocean floor by the undercurrents, David finally catches a glimpse (but not the audience at this point in the film) of the Blue Fairy that he has been seeking almost throughout his entire existence as a desiring subject. The sight of *his* Blue Fairy, long functioning as the Mecha boy’s objet petit a, rekindles David’s desire. But he is soon pulled up to the surface again, and, this time, Joe no longer frustrates David’s desire and quest for the real. This time Joe understands. It is now Joe who places David inside a police amphicopter (with Teddy by the boy’s side) and sends the amphicopter down into the ocean on a continued quest for the Blue Fairy, while he himself is hunted down and dragged up into the air by human police—the end of Joe’s (p)lot. With Teddy as his first and last companion since they embarked on their journey home, David drives the amphicopter to where the Blue Fairy stands (a used-to-be attraction resort of Coney Island, now submerged under the sea). There right in front of the statue David prays most fervently and earnestly, “Blue Fairy, please, please, please make me into a real live boy, please.” A bit later, we hear a voice-over narration about what happens to the Mecha boy and his journey:

And David continued to pray to the Blue Fairy there before him—she who smiled softly forever, she who welcomed forever. Eventually the floodlights dimmed and died, but David could still see her palely by day . . . , and he still addressed her in hope. He prayed until all the anemones had shriveled and died. He prayed as the

ocean froze . . . and the ice encased the caged amphibicopter and the Blue Fairy, too, locking them together where he could still make her out. A blue ghost in ice . . . always there, always smiling, always awaiting him. Eventually he never moved at all, but his eyes always stayed open, staring ahead forever all through the darkness of each night . . . and the next day . . . and the next day. Thus, 2,000 years passed by.

If the cinematic vision had ended there, David's (p)lot would have died, at best, with the *jouissance* of the Other outside symbolic enclosure (in this sense, not unlike the original David in Aldiss' short story). Had the film indeed concluded as such, David would have perished in the enjoyment of having found his Blue Fairy and, with her as his *objet petit a*, would have remained a desiring *and mourning* subject until (t)his end. Nevertheless, David would never have found home and returned to the real. He would never have been able to reconfigure, traverse, and complete his desiring *and mourning* processes; he would have mourned his lack interminably, for the statue of the Blue Fairy would never answer (echoing a deaf and silent God). Perhaps for some audience, this would have been a better end. But after all, David's journey is allowed to go on.

Two thousand years passed. Manhattan is completely buried underneath the surface of glacier ice. The human race is extinct. Aliens (some would contend that they are super-mechas) in a humanoid form come, and, through them, David and Teddy are revived. The cinematic narrative plot is brought back to a renewed and continued life. To the aliens that visit the Earth and desire to know about the human past, David is invaluable, for, as they tell the boy, "David, you are the enduring memory of the human race. The most lasting proof of their genius. We only want for your happiness." For them, David is the most meaningful rem(a)inder of the human Other because he has not

only survived but survived with a living memory to boot. The boy's memory is most instrumental and enlightening because it has a *narrative* quality to it—it tells, with temporality and causality, David's story of Monica, his journey and adventures. Indeed, the story that has survived human extinction is a story about love and loss, mourning and longing. Most of all, it is a story about finding and desiring home.

Finding one's way back home to the real with the beloved (m)Other governs not only David's desire but the desire in Spielberg's cinematic re-telling (of Aldiss' narrative). The film is the ultimate Blue Fairy that causes and sustains David's desire for a return to/of the real, and, through David's desire, our very own. At Spielberg's narrative end, the aliens are the narrative agent that grants David's wish and answers his prayers. (Here one could argue that the futurity of science and technology displaces and replaces the past of mythology in reconfiguring the human condition.) The aliens are able to bring back a return to/of the real for the boy. *Notwithstanding*, its return can only last for one single day. To resurrect the dead in the first place, the aliens will need something that carries or stores the D.N.A. of the dead. Fortunately, Teddy the toy bear picked up the lock of Mommy's hair which David, dared by Martin, cut off from her head while she was sleeping; since then, Teddy has been its faithful keeper through the ebbs and flows of time. With this lock of Monica's hair (another *objet petit a* in the film), the aliens are now able to bring her back. As mentioned, there are limits to the aliens' project of recreating the living presence of a person long dead. As one of the aliens explains (or tries to explain) to David:

We found the very fabric of space-time itself appeared to store information about every event which had ever occurred in the past. But the experiment was a failure, for those who were resurrected only lived through a single day of renewed life. When the resurrectees fell asleep on the night of their first new day, they died

again. As soon as they became unconscious, their very existence faded away into darkness. So you see, David, the equations had shown that once an individual space-time pathway had been used, it could not be reused. If you bring your mother back now, it will only be for one day, and then you will never be able to see her again.

In a science fantasy such as *A. I.*, it is neither the humans (e.g., Professor Hobby the creator) nor the human creation (i.e., the Blue Fairy) that helps effect the traversivity (or reconfiguration) of David's humanized fantasy and desire. The power to do so rests with the aliens, particularly their science and technology. Science is the agent that recreates the human/humanized fantasy and reconfigures the subject's desire of the real. Now, instead of being fixated on the Blue Fairy and the wish to become a real boy as he once was and for a very long while, David is willing to return to the real even if his return can last for only one single day as the aliens forewarned him in a friendly manner. Though he still wishes that, miraculously, things could turn out differently, that this one day would last forever, David does, to whatever degree, apprehend the fact that his freedom to desire is, after all, delimited. Such, in truth, is the real nature of desire—it is and shall remain in-complete-able and hence can only be satisfied metonymically and momentarily *even with the instrumentality of science*. It is precisely the (de)limiting power of science (and technology) vis-à-vis the delimited nature of human/humanized desire that marks the poignant psychical realism of Spielberg's filmic narrative.

Still, with the aliens' (de)limiting scientific power and technological advancement, David chooses to re-appropriate the real by way of a one-day fantasy. During this one day of his return to the real, David accompanies Monica's waking-up by her bedside. "I found you"—these are the first words he says to her, after millenniums of their separation and his seeking. He makes coffee for her, just the way she likes it. She combs

his hair after shower. He draws pictures of his adventures for Mommy. They play hide and seek in the house with Teddy. Together they bake a cake for David's "birthday," for, as a Mecha, he never had any. The voice-over narration goes: "And as the day wore on, David thought it was the happiest day of his life. All the problems seemed to have disappeared from his Mommy's mind. There was no Henry, there was no Martin, there was no grief. There was only David"—*and*, let us add, his final obtainment of the real *jouissance*, especially when, after being tucked in for the night by David, Monica tells him, "I love you, David. I do love you. I have always loved you." On this day, the desired Other loves him back and confirms her love in language; they are both the ones that love and are loved back. Between them there is no separation of any of such sorts—mental, emotional, physical, linguistic, communicative, temporal, and spatial. Then David goes to sleep, too, "and, for the first time in his life, he went to that place where dreams are born." On this one day, David finds home again with the loved and loving Other—the most desired human condition—and with peace for his longing *and mourning* soul.

We need God because we need to believe that, after death, we can still find a place called home and be granted ultimate peace to our longing souls in such a thing as the afterlife. Yet, with the death of God in our modern and postmodern consciousnesses, this human fantasy about reuniting in an afterlife with the desired Other—be it God Himself or other loved ones—also disappeared. What is left is a hole, an angst, a most unappeasable lack in our human existence. Fortunately, all is not lost. God may have vanished without a trace, but humanity has surely survived with its narratives and narrativity. The human (p)lot is still in the making—to help fill in our existential hole and reconfigure our desires and fantasies. And now the human race uses scientific imagination and possibilities to instrument its human emplotment. For those of us who have lost someone endearing in life, science fantasies such as *A. I.* proffer a momentary

return to/of the real and the real jouissance. David's desire, which points to lack and mourning, becomes our very own. His seeking and finding home is also ours. Narratives as such enable our *metamorphic* act of reading and readerly identification (which I have discussed in Chapter 2). Furthermore, they, functioning as *objets petit a*, help us act out and even, in the best cases, reconfigure our mourning and desiring life-processes. Granted, narratives like *A. I.* reinforce the painful truth that our desire for return to/of the real is, all in all, delimited (David's return, for instance, can only last for one single day), yet they give us the satisfaction and enjoyment that such a fantasy *can* be vicariously or metonymically fulfilled. They help take us home, bring peace to our aching souls, and allow us the freedom to desire—as well as mourn—afew. And such is one meaningful *raison d'être* of narrative and design of plot(ing) deeply embedded in human narrativity.

Works Cited

- Abbot, H. Porter. *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Adelman, Janet. *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Adelman, Janet, ed. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978.
- Aldiss, Brian. "Supertoys Last All Summer Long." 1969. *Supertoys Last All Summer Long and Other Stories of Future Time*. Reprint, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2001. 1-11.
- Alighieri, Dante. *Divine Comedy*. Trans. John Ciardi. New York: New American Library, 2003.
- Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. Malcolm Heath. New York: Penguin, 1996.
- Asimov, Isaac. *The Bicentennial Man and Other Stories*. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1976. 143-180.
- Auerbach, Nina. "Alice in Wonderland: A Curious Child." 1973. *Alice in Wonderland*. Ed. Donald J. Gray. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1992. 334-344.
- Austen, Jane. *Emma*. 1816. Intro. Margaret Drabble. 1989. New York: Signet, 1996.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail Mikhailovich. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: U of Texas P, 1981.
- . "The Problem of Speech Genres." 1979. *Modern Genre Theory*. Ed. David Duff. New York: Longman, 2000. 82-97.
- Bal, Mieke. *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 1985. 2nd ed. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1997.
- Balfour, Ian. *Northrop Frye*. Boston: Twayne, 1988.
- Barthes, Roland. "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives." 1966.

- Narratology*. Eds. Susana Onega and José Ángel García Landa. New York: Longman, 1996. 45-60.
- . *S/Z*. 1970. Trans. Richard Miller. Intro. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1974.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. Intro. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken, 1968.
- Bevington, David, ed. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. 4th ed. New York: Longman, 1997.
- Bloom, Harold. *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*. New York: Riverhead, 1998.
- . *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. New York: Riverhead, 1994.
- Bloom, Harold, ed. *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. New York: Chelsea House, 2006.
- Bonaparte, Marie. *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: A Psycho-Analytic Interpretation*. New York: Humanities, 1971.
- Bould, Mark. "Film and Television." *The Cambridge Introduction to Science Fiction*. Eds. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. 4th ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2007. 79-95.
- Bradley, A. C. "King Lear." 1904. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Janet Adelman. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978. 22-33.
- Broderick, Damien. "New Wave and Backwash: 1960-1980." *The Cambridge Introduction to Science Fiction*. Eds. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. 4th ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2007. 48-63.
- Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. 1847. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. 4th ed. New York: Norton, 2002.
- Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. Cambridge:

- Harvard UP, 1984.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Ed. Donald J. Gray. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1992.
- . *Through the Looking-Glass*. Ed. Donald J. Gray. 2nd ed. New York, Norton, 1992.
- Cavell, Stanley. "The Avoidance of Love." 1976. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Janet Adelman. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978. 70-87.
- Chamber, Ross. *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction*. Foreword Wlad Godzich. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.
- Chatman, Seymour. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1978.
- Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of Medusa." 1976. *French Feminism Reader*. Ed. Kelly Oliver. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. 257-275.
- Cooke, Brett, and Frederick Turner, eds. *Biopoetics: Evolutionary Explorations in the Arts*. Lexington, Kentucky: The International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS), 1999.
- Crane, R. S. "The Concept of Plot and the Plot of *Tom Jones*." 1950. *Critics and Criticism: Essays in Method*. Ed. R. S. Crane. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1952. 616-647.
- Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. New York: Palgrave, 1998.
- Davis, Robert Con, ed. *Lacan and Narration: The Psychoanalytic Difference in Narrative Theory*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1983.
- Demos, Virginia, ed. *Exploring Affect: The Selected Writings of Silvan S. Tompkins*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1995.
- Demurova, Nina. "Toward a Definition of *Alice's* Genre: The Folktale and Fairy-Tale Connections." 1982. *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: Alice's Adventures in*

- Wonderland. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 2006. 155-170.
- Dissanayake, Ellen. "‘Making Special’—An Undescribed Human Universal and the Core of a Behavior of Art." *Biopoetics: Evolutionary Explorations in the Arts*. Eds. Brett Cooke and Frederick Turner. Lexington, Kentucky: The International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS), 1999. 27-46.
- Dolar, Mladen. "Kafka's Voices." *Lacan: The Silent Partners*. Ed. Slavoj Žižk. New York: Verso, 2006. 312-333.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *The Double*. 1846. Trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. Intro. Richard Pevear. New York: Everyman's Library, 2005. 3-170.
- Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. 1860. Ed. Carol T. Christ. New York: Norton, 1994.
- Elton, William R. *King Lear and the Gods*. San Marino: Huntington Library, 1966.
- Empson, William. "The Child as Swain." 1935. *Alice in Wonderland*. Ed. Donald J. Gray. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1992. 344-357.
- Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. New York: Brunner-Routledge, 1996.
- . "From Kantian Ethics to Mystical Experience: An Exploration of Jouissance." *Key Concepts of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Dany Nobus. New York: Other, 1999. 1-28.
- Fink, Bruce. *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997.
- . *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.
- Fisher, Benjamin Franklin. "Poe and the Gothic Tradition." *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Kevin J. Hayes. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002. 72-

91.

Flaubert, Gustave. *Madame Bovary*. 1857. Trans. Geoffrey Wall. Intro. Geoffrey Wall. New York: Penguin, 1992.

Forster, E. M. *Aspects of the Novel*. 1927. New York: Harcourt, 1955.

Fowler, Don. "Second Thoughts on Closure." *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature*. Eds. Deborah H. Roberts, et al. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. 3-22.

Freud, Sigmund. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. 1920. Trans. James Strachey. Intro. Gregory Zilboorg. New York: Norton, 1989.

---. *The Ego and the Id*. 1923. Trans. Joan Riviere. Intro. Peter Gay. New York: Norton, 1989.

---. *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. 1926. Trans. Alix Strachey. Ed. James Strachey. Intro. Peter Gay. New York: Norton, 1989.

---. *The Interpretation of Dreams*. 1899. Trans. A. A. Brill. New York: Modern Library, 1994.

---. *Moses and Monotheism*. Trans. Katherine Jones. New York: Vintage, 1939.

---. *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*. Trans. Shawn Whiteside. Intro. Maud Ellmann. New York: Penguin, 2005.

---. "The Theme of the Three Caskets." 1913. *The Freud Reader*. Ed. Peter Gay. New York: Norton, 1989. 514-522.

---. *Totem and Taboo*. 1913. Trans. James Strachey. Intro. Peter Gay. New York: Norton, 1989.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. 1957. Foreword Harold Bloom. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000.

Gallops, Jane. *Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction*. New York:

- Macmillan, 1982.
- Gay, Peter. *Freud: A Life for Our Time*. New York: Norton, 1998.
- Gray, Donald J., ed. *Alice in Wonderland*. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 1992.
- Greimas, A.-J. "Reflections on Actantial Models." 1966. *Narratology*. Eds. Susana Onega and José Ángel García Landa. New York: Longman, 1996. 76-89.
- Grigg, Russell. "Discourse." *A Compendium of Lacanian Terms*. Eds. Huguette Glowinski, Zita Marks, and Sara Murphy. New York: Free Association, 2001. 61-70.
- Guillaumin, Colette. "The Question of Difference." 1982. *French Feminism Reader*. Ed. Kelly Oliver. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000. 99-118.
- Hayes, Kevin J., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002.
- Herman, David, ed. *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1999.
- Hoffman, Daniel. *Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe Poe*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1972.
- Holland, Norman N. *The Critical I*. New York: Columbia UP, 1992.
- . *The Dynamics of Literary Response*. New York: Oxford UP, 1968.
- Holmes, Diana. "Ecriture Feminine: The Theory of a Feminine Writing." *Women in Context: French Women's Writing 1848-1994*. London: Athlone, 1996. 216-230.
- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978.
- James, Edward, and Farah Mendlesohn, eds. *The Cambridge Introduction to Science Fiction*. 4th ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2007.
- Johnson, Samuel. *Rasselas (or The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia)*. 1759. Intro. J. P. Hardy. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.

- Jones, Gwyneth. "The Icons of Science Fiction." *The Cambridge Introduction to Science Fiction*. Eds. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn. 4th ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2007. 163-173.
- Kafalenos, Emma. *Narrative Causalities*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006.
- Kafka, Franz. *The Castle*. 1926. Trans. Mark Harman. New York: Schocken, 1998.
- Kahn, Paul W. *Law and Love: The Trials of King Lear*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2000.
- Kermode, Frank. *The Sense of an Ending*. 1967. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000.
- Knight, G. Wilson. "King Lear and the Comedy of the Grotesque." 1949. *Twentieth Century Interpretations of King Lear: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Janet Adelman. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1978. 34-49.
- Kristeva, Julia. "The Bounded Text." 1969. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. Ed. Leon S. Roudiez. Trans. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1980. 36-63.
- Lacan, Jacques. "Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis." 1948. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2004. 10-30.
- . *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2004.
- . "The Freudian Thing or the Meanings of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis." 1956. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2004. 107-137.
- . "Impromptu at Vincennes." 1969. *Television*. Ed. Joan Copjec. Trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson. New York: Norton, 1990. 117-128.
- . "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." 1949. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2004. 3-9.
- . "Responses to Students of Philosophy Concerning the Object of Psychoanalysis." 1966. *Television*. Ed. Joan Copjec. Trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson. New York: Norton, 1990. 107-114.

- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-60*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. Dennis Porter. New York: Norton, 1992.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book X: Anxiety*. Trans. Cormac Gallagher. Unpublished seminar, 1962-63.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1981.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Russell Grigg. New York: Norton, 2007.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XX: Encore: The Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-73*. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 1999.
- . "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious." 1960. *Écrits: A Selection*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2004. 281-312.
- Leitch, Thomas M. *What Stories Are: Narrative Theory and Interpretation*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1986.
- Levi-Stokes, Carmela. "Jouissance." *A Compendium of Lacanian Terms*. Eds. Huguette Glowinski, Zita Marks, and Sara Murphy. London: Free Association, 2001. 101-109.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Myth and Meaning*. New York: Schocken, 1979.
- Lukács, Georg. *The Theory of the Novel*. Trans. Anna Bostock. Cambridge: MIT P, 1971.
- Marías, Julián. *History of Philosophy*. Trans. Stanley Appelbaum and Clarence C. Strowbridge. New York: Dover, 1967.
- Martin, Wallace. *Recent Theories of Narrative*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1986.

- May, Charles E. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study of the Short Fiction*. Boston: Twayne, 1991.
- McCarthy, Cormac. *The Road*. New York: Vintage, 2006.
- Miller, D. A. *Narrative and Its Discontents: Problems of Closure in the Traditional Novel*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981.
- Miller, Joseph D. "The 'Novel' Novel: A Sociobiological Analysis of the Novelty Drive as Expressed in Science Fiction." *Biopoetics: Evolutionary Explorations in the Arts*. Eds. Brett Cooke and Frederick Turner. Lexington, Kentucky: The International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS), 1999. 315-334.
- Mitchell, Juliet. *Psychoanalysis and Feminism: A Radical Reassessment of Freudian Psychoanalysis*. 1974. New York: Penguin, 2000.
- Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.
- Oliver, Kelly, ed. *French Feminism Reader*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000.
- Onega, Susana, and José Ángel García Landa, eds. *Narratology*. New York: Longman, 1996.
- O'Neill, Patrick. *Fictions of Discourse: Reading Narrative Theory*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1994.
- Ovid. "Narcissus." *Metamorphoses*. Trans. Charles Martin. Intro. Bernard Knox. New York: Norton, 2004. 106-111.
- Phelan, James. *Experiencing Fiction: Judgments, Progressions, and the Rhetorical Theory of Narrative*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2007.
- . *Narrative as Rhetoric: Technique, Audiences, Ethics, Ideology*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996.
- Priest, Christopher. *The Prestige*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1995.
- Prince, Gerald. "Introduction to the Study of the Narratee." *Poétique* 14 (1973): 177-196. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Ed. Jane P. Tompkins. Reprint, Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980. 7-25.

- Propp, Vladimir. *Morphology of the Folktale*. 1927. Trans. Laurence Scott. Intro. Alan Dundes. 2nd ed. Austin: U of Texas P, 1968.
- . *Theory and History of Folklore*. Trans. Ariadna Y. Martin and Richard P. Martin. Intro. Anatoly Liberman. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984.
- Quinn, Arthur Hobson. *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*. New York: Cooper Square, 1969.
- Rabinowitz, Peter J. "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences." *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 121-141.
- Rabkin, Eric S. "Imagination and Survival: The Case of Fantastic Literature." *Biopoetics: Evolutionary Explorations in the Arts*. Eds. Brett Cooke and Frederick Turner. Reprint, Lexington, Kentucky: The International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences (ICUS), 1999. 293-314.
- Recalcati, Massimo. "The Empty Subject: Un-Triggered Psychoses in the New Forms of the Symptom." *lacanian ink* 26. Ed. Josefina Ayerza. New York: *lacanian ink*, 2005. 73-101.
- Richardson, Samuel. *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded*. 1740. New York: Oxford UP, 2001.
- Richter, David H. *Fable's End: Completeness and Closure in Rhetorical Fiction*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1974.
- Richter, David H., ed. *Narrative/Theory*. New York: Longman, 1996.
- Ricoeur, Paul. "The Metamorphoses of the Plot." *Time and Narrative*. 2nd vol. 1984. Trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985.
- Roberts, Deborah H. "Afterword: Ending and Aftermath, Ancient and Modern." *Classical Closure: Reading the End in Greek and Latin Literature*. Eds. Deborah H. Roberts, et al. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997. 251-273.
- Roudinesco, Elisabeth. *Jacques Lacan*. Trans. Barbara Bray. New York: Columbia UP, 1997.

- Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Cyberage Narratology: Computers, Metaphor, and Narrative." *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Ed. David Herman. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1999. 113-141.
- Salgado, Gamini. *King Lear: Text and Performance*. London: Macmillan, 1984.
- Sewell, Elizabeth. *The Field of Nonsense*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1970.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. 1818. Ed. J. Paul Hunter. New York: Norton, 1996.
- Singleton, Charles S. *Journey to Beatrice*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1958.
- Smith, Barbara H. *Poetic Closure: A Study of How Poems End*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1968.
- Speziale-Bagliacca, Roberto. *The King & the Adulteress: A Psychoanalytic and Literary Reinterpretation of Madame Bovary and King Lear*. Ed. Colin Rice. Foreword by Frank Kermode. Durham: Duke UP, 1998.
- Thackeray, William Makepeace. *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a Hero*. 1848. Intro. John Carey. New York: Penguin, 2001.
- Thompson, David. *Dante's Epic Journey*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974.
- Thompson, G. R., ed. *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe: Poems, Tales, Criticism*. New York: Perennial, 1970.
- Todorov, Tzvetan. "The Origin of Genres." 1976. *Modern Genre Theory*. Ed. David Duff. New York: Longman, 2000. 193-209.
- . *The Poetics of Prose*. Trans. Richard Howard. Intro. Jonathan Culler. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977.
- Tomashevsky, Boris. "Thematics." 1925. *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*. Trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 1965. 61-95.
- Tompkins, Jane P., ed. *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1980.
- Torgovnick, Marianna. *Closure in the Novel*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981.

- Walsh, Richard. *The Rhetoric of Fictionality: Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2007.
- Weekes, Karen. "Poe's Feminine Ideal." *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. Ed. Kevin J. Hayes. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002. 148-162.
- Williams, Charles. *The Figure of Beatrice: A Study in Dante*. London: Faber and Faber, 1943.
- Winnett, Susan. "Coming Unstrung: Women, Men, Narrative, and Principles of Pleasure." *PMLA* 105.3 (1990): 505-518.
- Wright, Elizabeth, and Edmond Wright, eds. *The Žižek Reader*. Malden: Blackwell, 2004.
- Zipes, Jack. *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition*. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Zipes, Jack, trans. *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*. New York: Bantam, 2003.
- Žižek, Slavoj. *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and out*. 1992. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- . "Kant with (or against) Sade." *The Žižek Reader*. Eds. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright. Malden: Blackwell, 2004. 283-301.
- . *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality*. London: Verso, 2005.
- . "The Undergrowth of Enjoyment: How Popular Culture Can Serve as an Introduction to Lacan." 1989. Eds. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright. *The Žižek Reader*. Malden: Blackwell, 1999. 13-36.
- Zunshine, Lisa. *Why We Read Fiction: Theory of Mind and the Novel*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2006.