**Modernity and Ethics:**
**The Ghost of Terror in French Thought**

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Mira Reinberg

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Bruno Chaouat

August 2010

## Acknowledgements

It is perhaps befitting to describe the accomplishment of a dissertation in terms of negative comparison. When climbing a high mountain, studying a difficult text, learning a new language, one can feel a sense of achievement and fulfillment even if one does not consummate the task at hand to a point of mastery. Halting the climb before reaching the summit, putting down the text before its end or resting along the process of absorbing a language do not impede the enjoyment and gratification we draw from these actions. Partial as the process may ultimately be, the distance travelled is sufficiently vast to inspire the traveler with a continuously replenished sense of pride.

Writing a dissertation is a different charge. The process takes place on multiple levels; it is as much an exercise in rigorous academic writing as an inquest of our creative ability. Probed and appraised, our thought processes track alongside intellectual, emotional, and physical integrity in the ongoing challenge. Eventually we must reach an endpoint for the work to provide the insight of a finished task. As students, dissertation writers fluctuate between feelings of insufficiency and enthusiasm. A long breath is the categorical imperative.

I owe numerous people for their help in sustaining this long breath. Pascale Crépon, Stéphanie Bérard, Muisi Krosi, Kathy Rider, Madeleine Craig, Anna Cavell, Greta Bliss, Becky Halat, Robert St. Clair, and Sara Wellman, my wonderful comrades at the Department of French and Italian, whose wit, opinions and emotional support have been more than precious. Many an hour have I spent with them under the caffeinated wings of the Urban Bean Café.

My professors and teachers – Daniel Brewer, Bruno Chaouat, Mária Brewer, Juliette Cherbuliez, Eileen Sivert, Jochen Schulte-Sasse, Tom Pepper, and John Mowitt. I had

the invaluable fortune of benefitting from their boundless intelligence, experience, and patience.

I thank my friends Melanie Wall, Tom Augst, Tami Shellef, Rammy Shellef, Rina Ashkenazi, Michal Garber, Renana Schneller, Haya Liphshutz, and Lianying Shan. Their pragmatic comments and affectionate listening steered my writing toward clarity and soberness. To Yuri and Sophi, our lives in Minneapolis remain the backdrop to all my successes in academia. Omissions and lacuna are always part of the growing process, and I am indebted too to those I have forgotten to name.

To my children Yonatan, Michael, and Roee, and my friend Giovana Xavier I am profoundly grateful. Their help has ranged from the intellectual to the technical with unrelenting encouragement and enduring warmth.

Lastly, my father, who passed away in January 2010, my first and true teacher, from whom I learned how to read and how to want to read more. His playfulness and seriousness resonate through my work. My mother, her conviction and strength are the reason for my persistence. To both I send my love.

## Dedication

To Yonatan, Michael, and Roee. For your trust and interest and love.

## Abstract

"Modernity and Ethics" examines the different incarnations of terror in literary and philosophical works, as well as in film, in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. I follow texts engaged in thinking the dialectic between Enlightenment and violence and which had critical influence on French and Francophone thought in particular and contemporary global thought in general. Three principal questions emerge from my reading of these works: First, in light of the turbulent post-colonial reality in North Africa and France, as well as the Middle East, are there unique historical moments that call for a state of exception in which the law is suspended for raison d'Etat, or does ethics demand a rethinking of insurrection? Second, how do the positions which these writers take toward the understanding of violence shift the ideological frameworks that articulate or contest the conceptualization of terror? And third, what are the ethical stakes in the intersection of art and resistance?

In works by Genet and films by Godard which confront the question of revolution I trace an ethics of resistance that is grounded more in the artistic interpretation of lived conflicts than in political endorsement or condemnation of violence. I analyze the notion of the gaze in Genet's work, and of time in films by Godard. I examine the continuing dialogue of modern thinkers such as Marx, Arendt, Benjamin, and Lyotard with the ethics of universalism founded by Enlightenment thought. The tension of this dialogue is exemplified in Hegel's conceptualization of the Reign of Terror as the logical

consequence of an ideological philosophy. Modernity is haunted by the relationship between two seemingly incompatible phenomena: the Declaration of the Rights of Man and terror. The philosophical debate illuminates crucial questions that indicate the difficulty in articulating a viable understanding of modern conflicts. With a reading of Lacan's essay "Kant avec Sade," in which psychoanalysis confronts (Kant's) moral categories with Sade's literary formulation of "happiness in evil," I analyze the discourse of evil in a 19th-century short story by Villiers. A psychoanalytic analysis of the literary text provides important insights into the understanding of categorical ethical formulations.

## Table of Contents

**Introduction**

As long as world events, real and violent, from Princess Diana's death to the "Mondial de football," wars or genocide, were contained within regional coordinates, and their disastrous effects were permitted only a global *diffusion*, the world could continue to fantasize about catastrophic events through films and the intermittent production of conspiracy theories. "Les événements ont cessé de faire grève," writes Jean Baudrillard in a paraphrase of the Argentinean writer Macedonio Fernandez.[1] The singularity of *l'esprit du terrorisme* is expressed not only in the upheaval it produces in history, but in its forcing of a transformation of the conditions of analysis itself. "Il faut prendre son temps," says Baudrillard, "car tant que les événements stagnaient, il fallait anticiper et aller plus vite qu'eux. Lorsqu'ils accélèrent à ce point, il faut aller plus lentement."[2]

If we adopt Baudrillard's qualification of the magnitude of September 11 as an irruption of a death that is more than real, "symbolique et superficielle – c'est-à-dire l'événement absolu et sans appel", then past terroristic events inflicted on, and by, modernity, or rather, the modern West, remained localized atrocities, restricted to a more or less defined ethnic or religious group of people.[3] How the holocaust would be construed in this schema of non-absolute events remains to be explored, but to Baudrillard – and to numerous intellectuals who attempted to comprehend the event in New York – the symbolic value of the catastrophe lies in the realization that by picking up all the cards – by condensing the technocratic apparatus and a monolithic thought – the system of power itself forced the Other to change the rules of the game.

The event of September 11 dispensed a discourse of terror in the beginning of the third millennium which inarguably resonates across genres and disciplines. In this context ‘discipline’ refers not only to various fields within the academic institution but to the entirety of the social arena – the political, military, commercial, and university spheres that have had recourse to the term which manifests itself in differentiated forms in each scene. Indeed, the use of ‘terror’ as an ideological (and anti-ideological) trope has become a staple. In all fields of social engagement, from the entertainment world to the military, from political campaigns to proposed constitutional changes, from its prevalence as topic of discussion in the media to its analyses in the academe, ‘terror’ has become an industry, if only as catalyst to scrutiny by numerous industrious deliberators.

The particular events of 2001 in the U.S. and the Middle East have supplied formidable catalysts to the debate, thus providing a plethora of perspectives enabling a broad array of criteria in its discussion. One can start from the blurring between the categorization of ‘terror’ as philosophical and psychological concept and the event of ideologically-driven ‘terrorism’. It is not excessive to presume that the very stake of terror as trope has caused many a good politician and writer to modulate the terms of its contextualization according to schemes that, if subjected to a rigorous logical analysis, would not meet the criteria enabling a reasonable meeting point.

David Punter writes of the terrorist as embodying freedom in its unimaginable dimension “around which the ghosts of martyrdom and posterity hover in as yet undecidable shapes.”[4] Ann Radcliffe, a pioneer of the eighteenth-century gothic novel, defined the term ‘terror’ in an essay called “On the Supernatural in Poetry”

written in 1826 (and published posthumously) as "characterized by 'obscurity' or indeterminacy in its treatment of potentially horrible events – it is this indeterminacy which leads to the sublime […] it expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life."[5] Terror conjures up a state of being that cannot be assimilated to experience yet manifests a limit that marks the forbidden, the non-human, perhaps death. In what way is the terrorist human? Putnam's question leads to the understanding of perversion which in psychoanalysis is considered the essence of the human in as much as perversion is the unending reaching to limits of what is reconcilable, testing not only the familiar fronts but perpetually 'inventing' or repeating borders within which human conventions are disturbed.

If modernity's distinguished project, Enlightenment, had a purpose, it was to shed light upon the secrets and contrivances sustained by superstitious ideologies; scientific proof, analytic reflection, and dissident artistic expression were the foremost tools in the eviction of tyrannical knowledges and the oppression and injustices they enable and justify. But probing into the ethical implications of understanding and defining what is human did not lose their urgency with the advent of what we call modernity. David Ellison's study of the interplay of the aesthetic and the ethical in modern European literature is an expansive journey into the complex risk in bordering off the two domains, ethics and aesthetics, into heterogeneous fields of study, a complexity that in itself raises discomfort: how are we to know the difference between the good and the bad if the boundaries between what is 'merely' aesthetic and categorically moral is obfuscated?[6] The difficulty of this question found its notorious quintessence in composer Karlheinz Stockhausen's aestheticizing

comment about the alleged beauty in the demise of the World Trade Center Towers which he qualified as "the greatest work of art that is possible in the whole cosmos."[7] Although Stockhausen later declared that, having spoken metaphorically, the terroristic "composition" was but a "satanic" spirit of anarchy who connives to "destroy creation," his pronouncement so blatantly established a possible affinity between art and evil as to suggest a manifesto avowing not only the redeeming power of art, but more startlingly that art can embody and subsume terror itself.

The question of boundaries and affinities between creative (aesthetic) and ethical thought touches on the crucial concern inherent in the definition of ethics and will lead me through this dissertation: what are the stakes manifest in the works of writers who affirm their ethical positions in their aesthetic pursuits? Moreover, since terror, as we have seen, stands for what is indeterminate in human inquiry and resurges in all its creative expressions, how is the question of terror and violence and the moral response it demands of us common to artists and scholars who compose their work within differing fields of intellectual creativity: philosophy, literature, film, and psychoanalysis? In focusing on French studies, the dissertation draws on the legacy of the Great Terror of the French Revolution which serves as marker constituting a unique historical and epistemological determinant for studying the aesthetic and the political act, for it has induced what is called "the French exception" – a uniquely transparent collision of violence and destructiveness with a call for justice and moral transformation.[8]

The task of the modern philosopher – since Kant, who ushered in philosophical Enlightenment in its formal definition – has been to speculate on and

understand the capacity of human reason in order to rein in the unknown that lies beyond its limits and threatens perpetually to obfuscate the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. Indeed boundaries seem confounded not only in regulating the grand ethical questions but also in determining the primacy of the discipline or domain engaged in reflecting on ethics: is philosophy the absolute authority in setting up a critical edifice of proposed definitions and conclusions by virtue of its disinterested procedures? Are literature and film, representing the aesthetic discourse, loyal instances of the muddied waters of human ethics precisely because they instantiate the indirect dynamics and the variation of rules in each aesthetic work? And what is the status of psychoanalysis as the epistemological agent that poses the question of our very desire to know the moral answer?

In his study of the intersection between the ethical and the aesthetic in Kant, Ellison writes that the aesthetic holds a double position in the *Critique of Judgment*: "it is, through the free and unregulated play of the faculties it allows, the limit toward which the Kantian system pushes and exhausts itself; and it is also, in its mediation between pure and practical reason, the passageway through which the ethical makes its appearance, shines forth."[9] What is important, notes Ellison, is that for Kant both the sublime and the beautiful "tend toward" the aim of the ethical; they are both "purposive" in relation to the moral even if the charming in the beautiful poses the danger of seduction to love rather than an opening to esteemed morality offered by the sublime.

Ellison goes on to conclude that Kant's own writing style discloses the precarious reality of a (philosophical) claim to unity, transparence, and 'coherence'

against the 'encroachment' of the aesthetic, but his important question to any writing on morality is articulated plainly: "is it possible to write morally about morality, in such a way that literary style, with its own manifold forms of 'prudence', does not aestheticize one's clear-sightedness and straightforward purpose?"[10]

In its infinite semantic recesses the literary text offers no unifying consolation of purpose and causality; on the contrary, it registers the failures to corroborate firm assumptions and thus harbors the uncanny force of uncertainty. In this sense, the aesthetic exhibits the characteristic that Kant attributes to the sublime: "it is an object (of nature) *the presentation of which determines the mind to think of nature's inability to attain to an exhibition of ideas*."[11] Albeit not a pure object of nature, the aesthetic work compels us to relate to a totality we cannot see and whose uncanny nature is magnified precisely because we presume to have meticulous and reliable mechanisms of cognition with which to understand its presence. The subjective experience of the reader before the aesthetic space of doubling, repetition, and indeterminacy conjures up the uncanny: anxieties and inconsistencies which escape language and yet are so intimately bound to its structure.

Freud establishes that the experience of the uncanny in literature depends on the discrepancy between real events and fantastic occurrences in the fictional world. In his famous essay Freud labors to distinguish precisely between the uncanny as it is conjured in literature and its perception in real life.[12] The ambivalence inherent in the term 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*) is manifest in its coincidence with its opposite, *heimlich*, which means both the homelike, familiar, agreeable restfulness and security, and withdrawn, concealed, dangerous secret. The oddity of the linguistic resonance is

reflected in the psychoanalytic theme of the double: Freud tells us that we create the double as an infantile defense mechanism, as "an insurance against the destruction of the ego, an 'energetic denial of the power of death.'"[13] But as primary narcissistic thoughts are 'surmounted' by adult consciousness, the idea of a double harbors "our suppressed acts of volition […] and all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed." In so far as adult consciousness is able to rid itself of "animistic" superstitions and seemingly mysterious repetitions, that is, perform a sober and mature "reality-testing," no feeling of uncanniness can inhabit it. This is the realm of "material reality," which, interestingly, corresponds to the domain of the literary; the paradox, notes Freud, resides in that while literature is more readily authorized to furnish uncertain framings and foreshadowing narratives since the reader willingly accepts the fictional discrepancy between the real and the invented, these unstable formations do not invoke the threat of the uncanny because fictional content can proceed only "from forms of thought that have been surmounted" within the framework of material reality.

It is only those thoughts that originate from a repressed ideational content (or residues of primitive, "animistic" mental activity), writes Freud, that will resist assimilation into normative rational constraints and will generate the uncanny. "But the story-teller has a *peculiarly* directive power over us," notes Freud, whose admiration of the writer is seen by Ellison as the attempt to frame the uncanny as an example of psychoanalytic investigation while as an aesthetic field it constitutes a trap for writers. To that end, says Ellison, Freud performs an aesthetic act, a critique of a literary uncanny text, *The Sandman* by E. T. A. Hoffman. Ellison goes on to

show how the novella uncannily anticipates Freud's project of recuperating the work into analytic categories.

"The 'double' has become a thing of terror." These are Freud's words, but Ellison's analysis of Freud may be referring precisely to the terror of the unbridled attempt to scrutinize the human psyche as a proper "pact with the devil."[14] Ellison proceeds to study Blanchot's distinction between narrative time as it is "navigated" in the novel (*roman*) and narrative (*récit)*: 'novel' time flows with familiar human sequence, linked to emotions and feasible developments, and records the individual human subjectivity. 'Narrative' voice tells the 'other' time, time without location, foreign to accessible signifiers and exterior to discourse of coherence and legitimacy.[15] This voice is the third voice of the *neutre*, which alone can call upon experience in the inexpressible vacuum, the secret of forgetfulness, which is the uncanny.

If the unmasterable third voice of the aesthetic forces us to contemplate the uncanny other – in us as well as in the other – in its fascinating strangeness and unknowability, what is the enigma of the (revolutionary) terrorist? For Punter, looking at the fascination with the caves of Tora Bora as "an inside-out version of the sublime," the aftermath of terrorism, whether performed by the individual or the state, leaves us with the desire to descend into the cave and search for an explanation to the unexplainable act of terror. The failure to produce an explanation, writes Punter, is the uncanny reminding us that no life can be unearthed – or filled in through and through – by meaning. He asks: "Do we wish our 'true story' to be told, or not? How much of a hand, as 'ghost writer', would we want to have in the narrative in order to

be satisfied, or to be content in the grave?"[16] I would add, in the same spirit, what sort of writing would render the story – the story of the terrorist as well as that of the narrator or the commentator – ethical? Again, what is moral writing?

A poem written by a Palestinian poet native of Gaza and published in a Hebrew anthology during the 2008 Gaza War captures the incommensurable gap between the power of aesthetic expression and military execution: there are moments so dominated by the carnage of violence so that no discourse – poetic, philosophical, scientific – can articulate the collapse of ethical categories. In "The Dust of the General" Nasr Jamil Sha'ath admonishes against faith in narratives of morality and sense:

> When the world will pass before you
>
> Do not stop it,
>
> Do not write a story,
>
> And do not say "the philosophers passed before me"
>
> It's the general's dust that goes past
>
> Milling wheat in your eyes, to blind you,
>
> To let your voice starve for air and visions.
>
> ……
>
> ……
>
> When the world will pass before you
>
> Don't look at it
>
> For it is within pissing reach!
>
> He raises his dust to the horizon

A man without center,

Between the rigidity of hope to the holiness of the knife

Declared war on himself

And on his way to arms a river has struck him

With no bed or memory.

He asked permission from the tree to prepare

From his daughter a boat to the other bank.

Something big died on his heart.

Of the heart they said grave

And of the door they said forest

The man he alone said

The poet raises his dust to the horizon![17]

The path to self-destruction, the declaration of war on oneself, coincides with the discontinuity of sense: hope is rigid and intransigent, therefore narrow-minded and doomed; the knife is sacred and purposeful, therefore promising hope. The terror of and from violence will incite humans to confound death and destruction with courage of heart. But the pursuit of arms obliterates memory – it must obliterate remembrance of suffering, of war's effects. The riverbed in which flow the uncanny secrets of an unachievable victory, of a fantasy of victory, must remain dry, comatose, thus shielded from the fear that its waters narrate the truth of nothingness and loss. The victorious generals – and theorists-philosophers – grind the stories of mourning, of vision(s) and voice, into a dusty discourse blurring the nearness of meaning's collapse and its frightening potential to resemble unholy urine.[18]

In this poem the general and the philosopher both partake of the discourse of sand-throwing, preserving the glory of law and order, while the poet alone can raise the dust – in both Arabic and Hebrew the etymology refers to *soil, earth* – to the horizon, or unearth the uncanny of holy violence: the double of terror inherent to discourse and language. To thought itself.

I reiterate Punter's question: "Does modernity wish to answer questions, or to foreclose them?"[19] The question with which he follows is indeed a very modern one: "Is there, in the end, any difference?" This is, finally, the question of the relationship of the forms of threat – the uncanny, terror – to knowledge, because even if the uncanny is not a distinctly modern experience, as Collins and Jervis imply, the doubt in its interpretive value is modern indeed since it admits to a certain impasse in the endeavor of ethics itself.[20] This question casts a shadow on the very plausibility of ethical thought, ethical writing, questioning, when it endeavors to evaluate, interpret, even judge its relation to terror. Or, as Nasr Jamil Sha'ath asks, can the poet and philosopher separate themselves from the thought of the general, unless, perhaps, man loses his center and declares war on himself in forgetting, detaching from practices built on narratives of identity?

Terror, in this context, refers both to acts of human violence, individual or state, and to terror inherent to thought, which is always faced with the threat of its own limits, the limits of an uncanny void which thought is desperately trying to plug, stop up with rational tales. In his recent study *Violence*, Slavoj Žižek distinguishes between 'subjective violence', easily identifiable in acts of terrorism, crime, and conflict, and 'objective violence', comprising the imposition of symbolic meaning

manifest in language. He adds the category of 'systemic' violence, the invisible "dark matter" which underlies and enables the very functioning of economic and political systems as such.[21] The most striking characterization of systemic violence Žižek provides is the upholding of the humanitarian cause as the beacon of morality which the West juggles in the face of calamities in the world. The insidiousness of this type of morality, according to Žižek, stems from its ideological function to mystify violent realities which ruling ideologies – in any societal, economic or political regime – seek to dissemble in order to disburden themselves of their consequences.

Thus humanitarian discourse will dwell on familiar disasters – the plight of Muslim women, families of the September 2001 tragedy, or Palestinian displacement, rather than on the decade-long massacre of millions in the Democratic Republic of Congo. This impalpable violence is exercised by the media as well as by well-meaning capitalist fundamentalists labeled by Žižek "The Good Men from Davos." Indeed both the old Right and the old Left adopt a discourse of "liberal communist Newspeak" whose signifier is 'smart', which they share with conservative hierarchical bodies such as the military and its investment in 'smart bombs'.

Žižek is concerned with the uncanny, pervasive, and systemic violence inherent to late capitalism, which resorts to charity as a "humanitarian mask" obfuscating capitalist complicity, even dependence, on sustaining poverty and social disequilibrium and subordination. The ethics of modernity contains an ingrained corrosive force which transforms the threat of an uncanny open-ended rationalism of the real into a "mythic evil" incarnated by radicals, fundamentalists, separatists: in a word, terrorists. If the danger of modern reality lies in the collapse of distinct

opposites – definable ideologies and religions – and in the naturalization and neutralization of systemic violence into a normative world view of 'pragmatism', then the task of the critic is to historicize the notion of objective violence in both its symbolic and systemic operations and to "resist the fascination of subjective violence" perpetrated by high profile fanatics and depraved individuals.[22]

Modernity, then, presents an exacting challenge to its critics, its thinkers, and its artists: to depict the depth of reality while resisting the fascination (by a transcendence) that extreme phenomena like terror and violence wield on interpreters and painters. To rephrase Žižek's words, an ethical engagement with terror will evoke the way terror affects subjectivity.[23] To this aim, I have chosen to discuss writers within the fields of literature, philosophy, film, and psychoanalysis, all of whom have contended with the different registers of violence in language and history and with the pitfalls that inhere in the very claim to ethical representation. The authors I will explore not only have addressed the question of terror from its logical, political, and psychoanalytic aspects, but, more significantly, have confronted the ambivalent standing of violence when it finds itself on the 'good' side, on the side of revolutionaries fighting for reforms. In other words, these authors have engaged with problematizing the ethical resonance of violence.

The complexity of writing ethically about politics, history, philosophy, art or any subject is captured by Heidegger in what he calls 'essencing', the making of essences through language; essencing is grounding and appropriating the 'what' of being in the 'how'.[24] His famous locution "language is the house of being" implies also that language symbolizes our conscious universe and that any shift in sensibility

and conception of naturalized essences assigns meaning to them in an act of violence. Thus violence is intrinsic to language, for language allows acts of essencing which contest the complacent symbolic cushion to which meaning is traditionally fastened. As such, language constitutes the fundamental calling of artists and thinkers: "This act of violence, this de-cided setting out upon the way to the Being of beings, moves humanity out of the hominess of what is most directly nearby and what is usual."[25] Jean-Jacques Lecercle sees the violence of language in its remainder which cannot be inscribed within a classificatory linguistic system; rather than its effect on metaphor, violence is intervention through metamorphosis of language.[26]

Although Heidegger is not included in the catalogue of writers whose works are examined here, his intellectual example is far from anecdotal, attesting to the radical difference between theoretical elaboration of violence as the grounding element for real (ontic) transformative eruptions, and the insistence on disclosing the philosophical-linguistic and ideological-empirical mechanisms that sustain the symbolic space of a given society.[27] In my readings I will extend the discussion of ethics and terror in which Hegel, Genet, Benjamin, Lacan, Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, and Godard engage in their works, to the stakes that operate in their own act of essencing. The questions that command my reading are the following: to the extent that modernity, conceived as a product of Enlightenment, is necessarily a carrier of the culture of reflection and bears within itself the knowledge of uncanny shadows trespassing boundaries of what is known and decipherable, does the discourse of these writers reveal certain investments that manifest fascination with violence and therefore run the risk of essentializing it? Second, does the literary and theoretical

discourse of violence depicted by these writers, a discourse 'contaminated' with fixed parameters that overdetermine its vision, also announce a course of action that can heed Heidegger's pursuit to "move humanity out of the hominess of what is most directly nearby and what is usual"? Or, in Lacan's terminology, do these writers perform a *passage à l'acte*, an enactment of the act of freedom – the only act of freedom – which obliges the subject to confront the palpable but obfuscated existence of the other's desire, and further necessitates the subject's encounter with the fantasmatic structure of his own desire? The subject of this dissertation, then, is the question of the writers' pledge to construe terror in their singular discourse while also evoking the way terror affects and sustains subjectivity and sanctioning the need to challenge its tenacity.

Chapter one will discuss Hegel's understanding of the Terror of the French Revolution in the context of his construction of a political philosophy of ethics; the relevance of Hegel's conception will be highlighted through his modern interpreters – Marx, Hannah Arendt, Jean-François Lyotard, Walter Benjamin, Žižek – particularly within the reception of Hegel in France in the twentieth century. Jean Genet's memoir of his sojourn with Palestinian revolutionaries in Jordanian camps in the early 1970s and his transformed reflections on the meaning of revolution will be analyzed in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three the focus will be on the filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard's, whose filmic trajectory, always absorbed by the imperative to agitate the established order of power through revolt and resistance, underscores in his later films the capacity of the aesthetic and cinematic to draw out an ethical understanding of subjectivity. Lastly, Chapter Four will analyze a nineteenth-century short story by

Villiers de L'Isle-Adam in light of Lacan's conception of perversion and its function in the inextricable relation of terror and the idea of Right.

Bearing witness to the French Revolution as an absolute radical event, Hegel was both enthralled by its materialization as a locus of emergence of real freedom for contemporary society and severely critical of the all-consuming intensification of violence on which the Revolution was conditioned. One may construe the French Revolution as the Hegelian Concept in so far as the Revolution is the embodiment of a principle that brings together all moments of the Concept: universality, particularity, and individuality. The Revolution as Concept is the universal principle in which all the particular elements (freedom, equality, terror, ideology, history, etc.) coalesce; the movement between the distinct or contradictory moments of the Concept, the dialectic of the universal and the particular, results in the singular self-articulation of the higher Concept by grasping together the opposites (*Begriff* is German for concept, while *begreifen* is to seize). In this context the development of the French Revolution into a stage of self-determinacy whereby the subject (the Revolution) can determine itself freely, with equality and liberty for all its subjects (citizens), is arrested by the unending action of its universal means, violence; the Revolution consumes its oppositions/opponents, thus ushering in the inevitable end of turning against itself in the form of the Reign of Terror.

Let us emphasize that the Hegelian project of advancing the tensions and contradictions through dialectical reasoning in order to achieve an all-embracing unity of a speculative and unfolding reason has not precisely as objective to

demonstrate the transcendence of philosophy over all other fields of creation. Hegel aspires to construct a system of thought from which humanity can benefit by forming human beings who possess a consciousness that is aware of itself, a consciousness that is able to reason its own errors and contradictions, and therefore will transcend the prejudicial effects of defective thoughts and employ reason to correct and improve their bearings.

This is a system driven by ethical considerations, and thus the understanding of 'ethics' is inextricably bound with the *rational*: the dynamic relationship of contradictions and negations is rational for Hegel because a consistent logical order is discernible in the development of life in all its spheres. Rational reasoning is the utmost manifestation of the freedom a subject can procure in his reality. This is the background to Hegel's locution that "the real is the rational." In Chapter One I will discuss this articulation and its relation to Hegel's pronouncements on the French Revolution and on the role of the State in ethical life. Hegel's conceptions of ethics and rationality have generated responses from Hegel followers and non-Hegelian thinkers alike and continue to do so today; in the writings of Marx, Benjamin, Arendt, Lyotard, and Žižek, who have devoted much of their work to the understanding of violence, there is tension of the 'burden' to contend with Hegel's legacy, and this force (or strain) will be discussed in the second part of the chapter.

During the last twenty years of his life Jean Genet chose to devote his writing to the political cause. For Gene Plunka, the one succinct component of Genet's work traceable throughout his life is a proclivity to risk-taking in art as well as crime and

political activism.[28] The resentment Genet harbored against mainstream society, represented in France by Catholic culture, propelled his identification with the outcasts of the vestiges of colonial repression – the Black Panthers in America, terrorist groups as the German Red Army Faction and the Japanese radical group Zengakuren, immigrants in France, and the Palestinians – the displaced victims of a relatively new extension of Western colonialism in Israel.

The transition – or metamorphosis, according to Plunka – from literary activity to political activism was acknowledged by Genet as the only real path to enacting change in society. Genet had no faith in the capacity of art to transform the colonialist mentality of Western culture or convince it to relinquish any of the bridles it had imposed on the minorities living within its geographic confines. However, the year-and-a-half-long sojourn among Palestinian Fedayeen in Jordan in the early 1970's was spent writing notes for a memoir that was assembled as a book a decade later and published posthumously in 1986. The Palestinians, dispossessed of their land and shuffled around those Middle Eastern countries allowing them temporary asylum, found themselves in the same provinces of exclusion and abjection within which Genet felt at home. His recording of the militants' life in their training camps was a pursuit of his own concept of realizable revolt; for Genet declared vociferously his disdain for any structured political agenda or ideology and his devotion to sustaining the state of revolt as the only feasible ontological capacity short of utter withdrawal from society. Plunka quotes Genet from an interview with Hubert Fichte: "I'm a man of revolt. My point of view is very egotistical. I would like the world – pay attention to the way I put it – I would like the world not to change, so that I may

be against the world."[29]

The thesis that what Genet sought throughout his life was solitude has biographical validity; like the isolated world of artistic creation which allowed him to write literature, political activism became a motive of persuasion. For abject groups he advocated persistence in the task of reminding the world of the need to resist the brutality of state institutions of all kinds. Genet the pariah found his kindred outcasts and exhorted them to remain, as he was, solitary renegades. This analysis of Genet views him as a paradigmatic figure of displacement and a witness to modernity's – particularly the twentieth-century – tenuous criteria for socialized and canonical interpretations of history and politics. My reading of Genet's late writings on the Palestinians and his memoir *Un captif amoureux* sets out to distinguish his acute awareness of the annihilative burden inherent in the revolutionary path. The vagabond and discredited existence in the company of the most 'authentic' rebels was also the stage for the vagaries that attend the construction of a national imaginary: the poetic chronicling of revolution brings into the field of vision performative features of the process of becoming subject. With Lacan's theory of the gaze I will trace Genet's ethical charting of the lines that expose the framing of subjectivity as identity, for both the revolutionary and the narrator.

"Antagonisms are not a recent phenomenon. There always are boys who want to beat other boys. Women are more reasonable. The work of a filmmaker is to try and make his film as best he can. Contrary to what is often said, a camera is not a gun, and a gun is not a camera: if it were, they wouldn't still blindfold those that are about to be shot."[30] Jean-Luc Godard's words were in response to a question posed in

the 1995 Montreal Film Festival concerning the role of the filmmaker in a world where bombs exploding are a daily occurrence. Even as Godard's work is often grouped according to temporal production – 1950s New wave, 1960s 'Maoist' socio-political statement, and 1980s to present narrative philosophical and even metaphysical 'essays' – all his films manifest his insight that the unexplainable in human history cannot be located in any place or configuration, but only in shifts between systems, both textual and imagistic. David Sterritt notes that Godard's determination was "to reinvent both film and video through the potency of language. He attempts this by turning words into screen-filling images; turning pictures into densely edited clusters able to convey the most abstract messages as readily as the most concrete."[31]

Stylistically, Godard created these "edited clusters" by inserting typographic sequences such as intertitles, graffiti, pamphlets, corporate logos, comic book pages, and many other image and text segments into the screened frame. Indeed the politicized films he created in the 1960s and early 1970s, in which he enacted his dedication to the Maoist social agenda by presenting blatant anti-bourgeois slates of defiance, are read as literal manifestos. The filmmaker embarked on the path of *engagement* in the cause of social critique in *Le Petit Soldat* (1960), *Les Carabiniers* (1963), *La Chinoise* (1967), *Week-End* (1967). His political tract-films were cemented in the ideological partnership with the Maoist radical Jean-Pierre Gorin to create the "the Dziga-Vertov Group," on which Godard commented in a 1970 interview: "Producing films at this moment means nothing else than: studying the changes undergone by the cinema from Lumière and Eisenstein to the present, and

studying them in practice; that is to say, by making films about the world of today."[32] This humble remark does not, however, dissimulate Godard's view concerning the paradox of cinema whose role is to reveal the substance of the world even as it formalizes these very qualities through its medium. This is why Godard did not distinguish between fiction and documentary – the essential cinematic technique of montage organizes the documentation of the 'real' world, while the same real world infiltrates the most rigidly engineered fictional representation.

Godard's 'revolutionary films' culminated with the unfinished video production with the Dziga-Vertov Group, conceived in 1970 as *Jusqu'à la victoire* – an observation of the Palestinian liberation movement, which he brought to completion only in 1975 with the title *Ici et ailleurs*. The films he made in the 1990s and after 2000 engaged in a search for the determinants of the historical past and of memory – individual and collective. *Hélas pour moi* (1993), *For Ever Mozart* (1996), *Eloge de l'amour* (2001), and *Notre musique* (2004) are permeated with imagistic and textual, or visual and conceptual, or aesthetic and metaphysical attempts to project time and its loss. These films, suggests James Quandt, are "a requiem for a world of art, politics, and philosophy that has been colonized and subdued by international capital […] in which resistance is impossible and everything is for sale, even history and the individual 'gaze.'"[33] One can neither escape memory nor harness it to capture reality except, perhaps, in cinema; in the words of Berthe, the former resistance member in *Eloge de l'amour*: "l'image – la seule chose capable de nier le néant, est aussi le regard du néant sur nous."

The explicit thematic references to redemption and resurrection in Godrad's

later work have been the object of scholarly and journalistic writing, interpreted as the mourning of cultural amnesia and twentieth-century atrocities, or the messianic prospect in the covenant with cinema. Some of these deliberations will be discussed in Chapter Three, all recalling the caption in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* which reiterates Saint Paul's statement, "l'image viendra au temps de la résurrection." If the task of cinema, as Godard says, is to point to the invisible through the very images it projects – "le cinéma est ce qui ne se voit pas. Cette hypothèse est ancrée dans un christianisme honnête et laïc" – then cinema can assume the deistic function of manuduction, leading us by our hand onto mystical spheres.[34]

Each of Godard's later films recapitulates the social ailments he assaulted in his early work – the terror of human barbarity, the holocaust, Sarajevo, Palestinian displacement, Capitalism's greed, the decay of culture. But it is crucially undeniable that all these films, whether in the multi-referential, enigmatic, allegorical *récit* of *Hélas pour moi*, *For Ever Mozart*, and *Eloge de l'amour* or the dramatized documentary which summons real and fictional personages (always symbolic) to Sarajevo, from which to tell of the Western epos of success and failure in *Notre musique* have repeated recourse to Christological imagery and iconography of redemption.

What is the end of Godard's reach for tokens of transcendence? In her reading of *Hélas pour moi*, Leslie Hill notes that in the encounter with the divine, Godard explores the certitude of the event: "Is the so-called sacred truly transcendent or obstinately immanent? Or neither one nor the other? At any event, the manifestation of transcendence turns out to be synonymous not with its consecration, but its

withdrawal."[35] Hill states that the "weakly messianic force" of cinema for Godard derives from its conception as movement of "withdrawal and reinscription," much like Blanchot's *neutre*, which designates art's rejection of a self-same apprehension of itself, and asserts the excess of textuality , image or sound over theses-based argumentation.[36]

The archival display of citations and references that reinscribes the overarching edifice of Western civilization's triumphs and monstrosities is an address to the singular historicity of the now – "time filled by the now" (*Jetztzeit*) – as Benjamin's words are quoted in *Hélas pour moi*.[37] Benjamin's own example is Robespierre, who, by extension, emblematizes the revolutionary moment by "blasting" the image of Rome "out of the continuum of history." For Godard, cinema can reconfigure the relation of the historical event to the past and the future; but even as it cannot *write* the history of the present, cinema can substantiate the present as an a-apocalyptic moment in which we are able, and must, assume the capacity to make decisions. Chapter Three will discuss Godard's *Notre musique*, whose temporal structure overtly and provocatively replicates the divine vision of afterlife, but, in fact, performs a terrestrial mirroring of theological time: the present is the moment of adulthood, which, we are reminded in *Eloge de l'amour*, unlike youth and old age "n'est jamais évident," has no name, but holds the unique redemptive imperative to answer ethically to the calling of the present moment.

The seeming confusion of the categories 'terror' and 'terrorism', or the "objective" and "systemic" violence elaborated by Žižek, evidences a linguistic instrumentalization of a term and its implication in the justification of political action.

This ambivalence points to the opaque structure involved in imbricating psychic perception of terror and its manifestation within social institutions and through historical circumstances. This perspective recalls Freud's observation that terror is bound up with the fundamentals of the death drive and thus constitutes psychoanalysis as a disturbing, uncanny or even terrifying discourse. Indeed, in introducing the collection *Terror and Psychoanalysis,* Lynsey Russell-Watts notes that "through its concern with traumatic manifestation of the unconscious, eruptions of *jouissance,* and encounters with the Real, the history and practice of psychoanalysis is already intertwined with the notion of terror."[38]

The case for terror as integral to both the psychic operation of terror and its function in social relations generalized to political ideologies is made by Luca Bosetti, who argues that terror is a fundamental structural component of the social field.[39] Since terror capitalizes and depends on the authority of the signifier, which, in itself, does not rely on an essential or specified doctrine, a closer study of the function of the signifier can provide a theoretical challenge to political theories which focus exclusively on socio-economic agitation in understanding social terror, and which dismiss the psychic and the Symbolic fields as particularized practices incapable of contributing to social change. In fact, suggests Bosetti, it is the understanding of the structural function of change that can expand the social and political subversive potential of terror. Seen from this perspective, an ethical approach to social acts of terrorism necessitates understanding the stakes involved in symbolic operations. It becomes palpably (and urgently) apparent that art and psychoanalysis can shed significant light on the structural function of terror in terms of its tenacious link to the

dynamics of the signifier. Bosetti offers the Lacanian theoretical model of the discourse of the Master as an example of the subversive potential in the (psycho)analytic substitution of the Master with the analyst whereby "the identification of the psycho-symbolic with the socio-economic link permits an acknowledgement of the structural function of terror by revealing the rule by terror of the signifier over the subject, and, consequently, not only explains the failure of terrorism, but also illustrates the logic of structural subversion enacted by the distinctive typology of terror manifest in the agency of the analyst."[40]

Bosetti's discussion positions Lacan's model in the actuality of the political unrest (if not terrorism) of 1968 and thus pinpoints its explicit responsiveness to empirical politics. Lacan draws his paradigm from the Hegelian elaboration of subjectivity as founded in the dialectic of the Master and the Slave whose movement famously traces the stages in the formation of self-consciousness. We are reminded that it was Hegel who distinguished fear from terror and determined the latter to be constitutive of immediate self-consciousness, for the slave's

> consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord [and] has trembled in every fiber of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal movement, this absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, pure *being-for-itself*, which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness.[41]

Terror is inseparable from the founding gesture of subjectivity which involves the petrifying severing of the subject from a harmonic sense of existence in nature. Terror is just as integral to the Symbolic whose chain of signification is founded by the meaning of Mastery and the signifiers deployed in representing this meaning. In situating the analyst at the position of the Master, Lacanian psychoanalysis exposes the mediation of the Symbolic in the constitution of subjectivity and confronts the subject with the incumbent void and nothingness with which it contends through a perpetual effort to recreate the conditions for the realization of his ideal (lost) ego.

This exposure is the ethical venture of psychoanalysis, both as praxis and theory. As theory, psychoanalysis traces the intricate function of the fantasy, the subject's sole path to recuperate the perceived enjoyment – jouissance – lost in the encounter with the demands of the symbolic other. In literature, let us recall Freud's words, "the story-teller has a *peculiarly* directive power over us," annexing a space to stage the mysterious repetitions and uncanniness of fantasies and to enact the frustrating choices of identification extended to the subject: indeed being subject means being reduced to identification with the object of fantasy. The fictional work amplifies, annotates, and dilates the impossible circuits pulling the subject toward its object-cause of desire, which is locked into the desire of the Other, forever unknown. That is why the fantasy is inherently masochistic: to become object and procure jouissance for the Other's desire, one must relinquish one's subjectivity, its singular position in discourse, and partake in the movement formulated by Freud and Lacan in terms of the death drive. In its "peculiar" capacity to dramatize this terrifying conflict, the literary work hyperbolizes the potential aberration and (self-)destructiveness of

the encounter with desire, and charts the figures that in the theory are prescribed as perversion, fantasy, and self-consciousness.

Villiers de L'Isle-Adam's 1883 short story "Le Désir d'être un homme" contemplates the very circuits of fantasy whose fulfillment is determined by the logic of signification. This logic is brutally revealed, even betrayed, in the story because by positioning himself as master, the protagonist turns the burden of producing jouissance against himself, laying bare the mediation, by symbolic identification, of desire and loss. With a study of Lacan's discussion of perversion in the essay "Kant avec Sade," Chapter Four will offer a reading of the totalitarian grip with which fantasy can hold us hostage when the symbolic turns to a terroristic perversion. This last reading will return us, then, to the General's desire for victory, and will permit psychoanalytic theory to clear away a bit of the dust of his fantasies.

**Notes to Introduction**

[1] Jean Baudrillard, *L'Esprit du terrorisme* (Paris: Galilée, 2002), p. 9.
[2] *L'Esprit du terrorism*., p. 10.
[3] *L'Esprit du terrorism*., p. 25.
[4] David Punter, "Terrorism and the Uncanny," in *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*, Jo Collins and John Jervis, eds. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008) p. 202.
[5] Ann Radcliffe, "On the Supernatural in Poetry," *The New Monthly Magazine* 7 (1826), pp. 145-52.
[6] David Ellison, *Ethics and Aesthetics in European Modernist Literature: From the Sublime to the Uncanny* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[7] Karlheinz Stockhausen, quoted by Anthony Tommasini, "Music; The Devil Made Him Do It," *New York Times* (September 30, 2001).
http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/30/arts/music-the-devil-made-him-do-it.html
[8] Marc Augé, "The French Exception: End or Continuation?" in *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought*, Jean-Joseph Goux and Philip R. Wood, eds. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 57.
[9] *Ethics and Aesthetics*, p. 6.
[10] *Ethics and Aesthetics*, p. 19.
[11] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), p. 127.
[12] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny," trans. James Strachey.
http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~amtower/uncanny.html.
[13] Freud attributes the development of the concept of the 'double' to Otto Rank and quotes him in this example.
[14] *Ethics and Aesthetics*, p. 84.
[15] Ellison draws from two of Blanchot's works: "Le Chant des sirènes," *Le Livre à venir* (Paris: Folio, 1959); "La Voix narrative, le 'il,' le neutre," *De Kafka à Kafka* (Paris: Gallimard "Idées," 1981).
[16] "Terrorism and the Uncanny," p. 211.
[17] Nasr Jamil Sha'ath, published in *La-tset! An Anthology against the War in Gaza*, published in Hebrew by Etgar, Maarav, Sedek, Daka, Maayan and Guerilla Tarbut, Tel Aviv 1.1.2009. Translated from the Arabic by Guy Ron-Gilboa. English translation mine.
http://documents.scribd.com/docs/48306ixmpxjqwetei2v.pdf, p. 38.
[18] One is reminded of Bertold Brecht's 1938 poem, "General, Your Tank is a Powerful Vehicle," in "From a German War Primer," part of the *Svendborg Poems*. Brecht has perhaps more faith in human thought as autonomous even when it belongs to a military leader.
[19] "Terrorism and the Uncanny," p. 211.
[20] Jo Collins and John Jervis, "Introduction," *Uncanny Modernity*, pp. 1-9.
[21] Slavoj Zizek, *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008).
[22] *Violence*, p. 11.
[23] *Violence*, p. 6.
[24] Mrtin Heidegger, *On the Essence of Language: The Metaphysics of Language and the Essencing of the Word*, trans. Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p. 83.
[25] Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), pp. 115-28.
[26] Jean-Jacques Lecercle, *The Violence of Language* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

[27] In question is the controversy over Heidegger's engagement with the Nazi party and election to the rectorship of the University of Freiburg in 1933.
[28] Gene A. Plunka, *The Rites of Passage of Jean Genet: The Art and Aesthetics of Risk Taking* (Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992).
[29]Hubert Fichte, "Jean Genet Talks to Huber Fichte," trans. Patrick MacCarthy, *New Review* 4:37 (1977), p. 15. "L'homme que je suis n'est pas un homme d'adhésion, c'est un homme de révolte. Mon point de vue est très égoïste. Je voudrais que le monde, mais faites bien attention à la façon dont je le dis, je voudrais que le monde ne change pas pour me permettre d'être contre le monde," "Entretien avec Hubert Fichte," *L'Ennemi déclaré* (Paris: Gallimard, 1991), p. 156.
[30] Jean-Luc Godard, interviewed by Henri Béhar, Montreal Film Festival, 1995. http://www.filmscouts.com/scripts/interview.cfm?File=2800
[31] Jean-Luc Godard, *Interviews*, ed. David Sterritt (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), p. xi.
[32] Andrew Sarris, "Godard and the Revolution," in *Interviews*, p. 51.
[33] James Quandt, "Here and Elsewhere: Projecting Godard," in *For Ever Godard*, eds. Michael Temple, James S. Williams, Michael Witt (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004), p. 137.
[34] Jean-Luc Godard, *Godard par Godard* (ed. A. Bergala), vol.2, (Paris: Les Cahiers du cinéma, 1998 ), p. 429.
[35] Leslie Hill, "'A Form That Thinks': Godard, Blanchot, Citation," in *For Ever Godard*, p. 397.
[36] Hill's essay includes an expansive reflection on citation in Godard's films in general, and on his citations and references to Blanchot in image and text (photographs and quotes) in particular. See "'A Form That Thinks': Godard, Blanchot, Citation," *For Ever Godard*, pp. 396-415.
[37] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 261.
[38] *Terror and Psychoanalysis*, eds. Lynsey Russell-Watts and Lisa Walsh, *Nottingham French Studies*, 46:3 (Autumn 2007), p. 1.
[39] Luca Bosetti, "Terror on Two Fronts: Godard and Lacan on 1968," in *Terror and Psychoanalysis*, pp. 62-72.
[40] "Terror on Two Fronts," p. 66.
[41] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 117.

## Chapter 1

## The Tribunal of the Rational: Modern Philosophers in Conversation with Hegel

Indisputably one of philosophy's most controversial statements was uttered by Hegel in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*: "What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational."[1] Perhaps this statement explains the appearance, in the introduction to almost every exegetical study of Hegel, of an attempt either to justify or to neutralize the production of yet another critical commentary on his work. The debate surrounding the premise of Hegel's philosophical system, writes Steven Smith, turns on the perspective of interpretation. For some scholars Hegel is indeed a political philosopher, albeit a conservative 'Prussionist' one, well planted in historical empirical thought. For others his work embodies the rigor of philosophy as such: a system of strict and 'ruthless' categories of analysis within which experience is interpreted according to the logic of metaphysics. In his commentary, Stephen Smith acknowledges the extraordinary systematicity which Hegel the philosopher was determined to attain, but rejects the notion that Hegel's logic is a first philosophy from which contents of history and politics could be deduced only through a process premised on logic. Smith introduces his critique by asking "whether Hegel is better understood, not as doing some kind of fundamental ontology, but as practicing a form of cultural hermeneutics."[2]

Indeed, why rehabilitate Hegel in a work on ethics? In order for yet another study of "the old man" (Dudley Knowles) not to fall into a production of simplistic assumptions about Hegelian 'panlogicism' (reality phenomenalized in a totalizing

dialectical mediation, where no element escapes the self-movement of the Concept), it is necessary to constitute an argument that relies less on the need to demystify and render accessible the impenetrable and pretentious jargon that is Hegel's discourse. Moreover, it would not be (ethically) plausible to confine the interrogation solely to the forceful pertinence to modern social reflection manifest in Hegel's insistence on the concrete vitality of social institutions. In this chapter I will consider the effects of Hegel's articulation of a moral philosophy on intellectual discourse on revolution and terror that is based in France but pursued elsewhere as well: the French Revolution continues to represent the pivotal stage for the actualization of the rational demand for human equality. I will argue that if Hegel continues to resurge in analyses of political philosophers and literary critics such as Marx, Benjamin, Arendt, Lyotard, and Žižek, his work rescrutinized, reassessed or re-refuted, it is because within his redoubtable philosophical tenet of the dialectic inheres an ethics of rejection of distinction between the theoretical and the practical, between cognition and activity – the ethics of identity of the rational and the actual.

**Hegel in Early Twentieth-Century France – *L'Histoire malgré tout***

The burgeoning of Hegelian thought in France of the 1930's as a result of the importation of German philosophy was facilitated by the fertile ground of post-war intellectual criticism. That criticism was characterized by the confrontation between the good and evil of modernity: science and philosophy harnessed to promoting social change (the good progress), and science and philosophy effectuating economic degradation and war (the evil in progress). Two studies of the history of Hegelianism

in France discuss the most influential Hegel thinkers – Jean Wahl, Alexandre Koyré, Jean Hyppolite, Alexandre Kojève, and Eric Weil.[3] While Michael Roth emphasizes the transformation in their approaches to Hegel's philosophy over time and outlines the associations between these thinkers and social and aesthetic movements such as surrealism, Marxism, and existentialism, Gwendoline Jarczak and Pierre-Jean Labarrière devote a greater part of their study to upholding their approach to Hegel's system as open to a deployment of infinite series of interactions in reality, rather than as inherently closed and totalizing.

Roth's purpose in focusing on Hyppolite, Kojève, and Weil is twofold. First, to demonstrate the shift in the thinkers' interpretation of Hegelian philosophy of history, a shift which reflects the transformation in twentieth-century thought "from a concern with questions of significance to a concern with questions of use or function, from 'What does our history mean?' or 'How can we make sense of the past?' to 'How does our history work?' or 'How is our past put together?'"[4] His second concern is to offer a gesture of caution toward a sweeping rejection of a Hegelian reading of the past by 'poststructuralist' thinking. The afterward, entitled "Styles of Delegitimation," examines the views of two representatives of this approach, Deleuze and Foucault, who turned to Nietzsche for a critique of a totalizing vision of history such as Hegel's which reduces its diversity to the single ruling logic of reason.

Thus Hyppolite's early views of history as a meaningful totality to which the human being contributes through the development of consciousness, entail also a "heroic Hegelian" understanding of the alienation and separation that is part of this humanistic progress. The tragedy of the Absolute is the force of negativity in its core.

But the alienated "unhappy consciousness" is the very agency of the dialectic, actualizing the idea of progress through struggle, work, and contradiction. The human being is a political being in so far as he propels history toward a universal understanding of the whole. In the late 1940's and the 1950's the certainty of apprehending history as progress gave way to the sober examination of the meaning of revolution and political freedom; moreover, with the influence of Heidegger's critique of humanism on French philosophy, Hyppolite adopted Heidegger's definition of being human as knowing the moment of existence at the limits of our own possibilities. The truth of Being reveals itself through language and does not partake of an active endeavor to change the world by acting on it. Hyppolite, in abandoning a historicist view of history to be found in reason and in social and political organizations, rejected a transcendental standard for judging history but turned to a transhistorical understanding of Being in terms of language, logic, and syntax. Language is at the center of interest and not the human as (a pre-interpreted) object; thus man is no longer responsible for historical change.

Kojève's early theorizing of history, writes Roth, relies on the Hegelian master-slave relation and on the dialectic of desire which sustains it. The human being strives both to preserve desire and to attain satisfaction for the desire, where this satisfaction involves a social recognition of the object desired. In so far as the human being is willing to risk his life to attain recognition, he is exhibiting self-consciousness, and his struggles activate historical change.[5] Kojève accepts the notion of the End of history in as much as it affirms both the possibility of human action and the role of philosophy in formulating a definitive, non-relativist conception of

historical action. In the mid-1950s Kojève's perspective toward the End of history as triumph of equality over hierarchy is affected by recognition of the limitations of philosophical discourse; he persists, however, in demonstrating that philosophical work was completed with Hegel and insists on the fundamental function of self-consciousness in progress. Roth points to the ironic form that his late writing took as what distinguishes his work from other slave ideologies which substitute a new Master to the dead God: "The commitment to self-consciousness evinced by Kojève's late philosophy works against such a substitution […] His work to continue that conversation [of philosophy] is the sign of his struggle against the last Master, History."[6]

For Eric Weil, philosophy's condition of uncertainty brings sense out of historical action in promoting the choice of reason over violence. Through discussions with others, reason connects the alienated individual to community. Weil's later writings turned to an elaboration of a moral search beyond certainty and history for sense and direction. Roth points to the name Weil gives to this universalizable moral foundation: "nostalgia for certainty."[7]

Roth's presentation of Hegelianism in France as a turn from questions of meaning to those of function and structure finds its logical corollary or 'sequel' in the last chapter entitled "Afterward" (and not "Conclusion"). Cautious of the End of history vision, Roth also points to the conjectural nature of so-called postmodern thinking which, in its totalizing delegitimation of Hegelian understandings of the past in so far as they imply a progress in history, casts a shadow over the legitimacy of any historical action. Deleuze turns away from Hegelian anthropologism and its

grounding of human beings in their culturally determined history and toward Nietzsche's fundamental pluralism which sees history as a succession of forces that compete to appropriate the historical thing. Instead of a unifying narrative of history where change is dependent on the force of a reactive and antagonistic force of the negative, Deleuze advocates an affirmation based on evaluation of a will which knows its own difference and the creativeness and freedom it can generate into the world. Foucault, for his part, turned to 'style of life' as a means to avoid the search for universal criteria of morality and philosophical values. Roth notes that in rejecting the Hegelian negation as a motor of political change, Foucault's preference of individual expression and style is a personal commitment, but in his reflections on discursive possibilities and the relation of epistemologies to power, he does not offer forms of beneficial change: "Instead, the gap separating the present and any goals for the future remains supreme. It is a gap of theoretical silence, and it is the gap of politics."[8]

For Jarczyk and Labarrière the rejection of Hegel's notion of absolute knowledge fixes it within a finite figure of the 'absolute of knowledge'. In their reading, the Hegelian absolute qualifies an emerging reality whose movement of constitution includes dimensions of contingency and facilitates its participation in its actualization. Against Hegel's critics who conceive of absolute knowledge as a specter of ultimate knowing, "visée limite d'une ambition démiurgique qui prétendait faire la somme des sagesses du monde, pour les enfermer dans un 'absolu du savoir' en marge et au-delà des contingences communes," the writers suggest that for Hegel the notion of absolute knowledge both authorizes and demands participation in

historical process (*processualité*) without origin or end, a history delivered from its dogmatisms and capable of accommodating the novelty of its elements. What Hegel insisted on, they write, is that historical novelty – the real – be treated with or through reason: "une nouveauté sur laquelle le philosophe s'enhardit seulement à avancer une parole de sens."[9] How then is reason consistent with the real for Hegel?

**The (Modern) Task of the Philosopher**

Hegel's philosophical work was produced in a period when the rigidity of thought gripped by ideologies had to cede to a certain conceptual fluctuation, if not flexibility, in order to explain experience. This modification produced a tension within the production of a rigorous system of logic which is a most powerful marker of the depth of the socio-cognitive conflict Hegel's world was undergoing. It is true that Hegel the functionary-philosopher preached in defense of state scrutiny of philosophical doctrines; it is true as well that in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right* he denounced fellow teachers ideologically suspect of "the destruction of public order and the laws of the state" (*PR*, 18). As Dudley Knowles notes, Hegel may be defined as a conservative philosopher in as much as conservative doctrine assigns normative force to existing practices and institutions. It thus undercuts potential for reforms and provides intellectual justification for the status quo.[10]

As a philosopher writing at the end of the twentieth century, Knowles provides a revealing insight into the tenuous state of a philosophy of ethics as object of academic discourse. He follows a rhetorical trajectory of a question whose persistence and centrality form the hermeneutic spine of his study: How can the charges against the conservatism or even authoritarianism explicit in his complacency

with the state's repression of liberal freedoms be reconciled with his adherence to freedom as first principle of a political philosophy? Knowles' questions point to a desire to reconcile what appears as a disturbing intellectual phenomenon by subjecting the object of study to an immanent critique: a rigorous critique of a rigorous philosophical treatise. Rigorous as it is in relation to the logical propositions of the work, his study leaves the moral ambiguity intact.

Hegel is unequivocal in his thesis of a philosophy as ethics: the task of the philosopher is that of comprehension, of demonstrating the rational bases of modern man's claims of knowledge. His task is unabashedly intellectual – a scientific or systematic demonstration of avowed truths, which entails criticism of false determinations, whether they are part of a political, rhetorical or evangelical discourse. Why is it, laments Hegel, that scientists are granted epistemological permission to "take nature as it is," to claim that "nature is *rational within itself*," and to submit this *actual* reasoned argument to legitimate investigation and conceptualization by knowledge, while *the ethical world*, which is

> the state, or reason as it actualizes itself in self-consciousness, is not supposed to be happy that it is reason itself which gained authority and is, as the laws of nature, inherent within self-consciousness. The spiritual world is supposed rather to be at the mercy of contingency and arbitrariness, to be god-forsaken, so that, according to this atheism of the ethical world, *truth* lies *outside* it, and at the same time, since reason is nevertheless *also* supposed to be present in it, truth is nothing but a problem" (*PR*, 12-14).

No other art or science is treated with the ultimate degree of contempt, whereby

"everyone, whatever his condition, is convinced that he knows all about philosophy in general and can pass judgment on it" (*PR*, 15). The task of the philosopher is nothing but the rational articulation of those patterns of ethical norms manifested in institutions which make the social world a structure of freedom.

Knowles goes into a lengthy discussion of the different logical configurations that can be deduced from the determination that the rational is actual and the actual is rational; moreover, he is mindful of the essentially ahistorical disposition of the work, quoting Hegel's admonition that "[t]o consider the emergence and development of determinations of right *as they appear in time* is a *purely historical* task" which is praiseworthy in itself but "bears no relation to the philosophical approach [and should not be] confused with the development of the concept" (*PR*, 29). But Hegel's conception of reason as an instrument of moral determination is necessarily *and* logically located in the consciousness that can only be actualized in the social world even as this conception is framed within a philosophy of 'absolute idealism'.

Why, then, does a modern researcher like Knowles identify the core quandary of Hegel's project as its impotence in revealing the *necessity* of the subject of study which he defines as "the manner in which reason is realized"?[11] Let us recall that the subject of study as stated by Hegel is the *Idea of right: the concept of right and its actualization*, and that he asserts in the preface that philosophy can aspire to comprehend only what *is*, "for *what is* is reason" (*PR*, 21). He thus quotes Hegel's own attack in the Introduction on the conception of right as "*facts of consciousness* […] natural and intensified feelings, our *own heart* and *enthusiasm*" (*PR*, 27).

One conclusion could highlight Hegel's admitted inability to disclose a

method advancing a mode of ethical determination that does not rely principally on the analysis of self-understanding. But what needs to be stressed here is that in the same paragraph Hegel distinguishes carefully between two possible conceptions of right: on the one hand, prevailing ideas that correspond to feelings and properties and are therefore *representations*, and, on the other hand, the examination of that which is "essential to science," the content and the form of concept. Only after the careful examination of correspondences of the form *and* the content, between concept and its representation, may the representation "be raised" and shown to be contained and "present in essence within it." It would be appropriate to take Hegel at his own qualification of the particular case of the philosophical inquiry in the introduction: the science of right is a part of philosophy and must therefore have a starting point from which it will develop immanently the *reason* for the thing itself – the Idea – out of the concept. Its deduction is thus presupposed and taken as a given:

> Philosophy forms a circle. It has an initial or immediate point – for it must begin somewhere – a point which is not demonstrated and is not a result. But the starting point of philosophy is immediately relative, for it must appear at another end-point as a result. Philosophy is a sequence which is not suspended in mid-air; it does not begin immediately, but is rounded off within itself (*PR*, 26).

Hegel thus concedes that philosophy is always already curbed by the assumptions it must make, the fundamental one being the 'pure concept,' whose value lies only in the shape it assumes in its actualization. As Allen Wood acknowledges, speculative logic – which declared itself immune from the pitfalls of "the older logic"

of classification and definition espoused by the understanding and rejected by Hegel – has not attained the resolution of philosophical paradoxes to which it had aspired.[12] But even as Hegel's adherence to the speculative mode of cognition suggests that it is the true scientific method, he is also unrelenting in his insistence on the inseparability of content and form, contrary to the "pretentious" insistence of some "philosophical writers" that *content* of the matter (*Sache*) is alone of consequence. For along with the aspirations of discovering, stating, and disseminating truths, these champions of truth overlook the essential flightiness that characterizes the value of truths as such – the variation in their applicability to different parties. In order for an *enduring* element to appear from these "formlessly fluctuating reflections," a tenaciously reliable methodology needs to be elaborated, one that science alone is capable of conceiving.

This determination is fundamental to the notion of ethics in so far as it conceives of all things, of the thing itself and its content, as rational in itself by virtue of its given essence, its being in the real, its existence. But in order for it to be submitted to and comprehended by the *free* mind, its form needs to be understood rationally, that is, the thing must gain a rational form. Neither the "external positive authority of the state or of mutual agreement among human beings […] nor the authority of inner feeling and the heart […] nor the testimony of the inner spirit that immediately concurs with this" (*PR*, 11) can grant truth a *given* validity without being known in itself and by itself in its union with the truth.

This last quote is illuminating in that it conjures up and ties together some principal notions in their relation to *right* and which also constitute the target of criticism directed at the inadequacy of a Hegelian 'panlogicism' – reality as a totality

of dialectical mediation. Far from imputing to the State a self-evident and privileged determining function in the articulation of the substance of right, in the preface Hegel admonishes against perceiving the plurality and relativity of opinions as the sole obstacle to recognizing a universal validity. If it is true that the state represents for him substantial right, the free mind must nonetheless diverge from what is universally accepted and "invent something *particular* for itself" (*PR*, 12). In that, he challenges as well the claim to an essential difference of the rationality of law within nature itself and within the world of the state or consciousness – the world of right. Philosophers generally hold that nature is "rational within itself," and knowledge can investigate the "actual reason present within it" which constitutes a law of immanent harmony and stable expression. The law of *right*, however, is conceived as contingent and erratic, thus justifying a diverse range of subjective and morally personalized philosophical reflections. Hegel refers to this as "atheism of the ethical world" (*PR*, 14).

What Hegel is willing to concede is that in nature, "the highest truth is that a law *exists at all*," and this in contradistinction to the law of right, where the thing cannot be established as valid just because it exists. For Hegel there can never be identity between what *is* and what *ought to be*, and the obligation to answer to this discrepancy is precisely what constitutes the categorical imperative for him – to learn to recognize what right is: "In right, the human being must encounter his own reason; he must therefore consider the rationality of right" (*PR*, 14).

A philosophy that promulgates a thought of spirit based on the "heart" and on "friendship" masquerades for a pious doctrine whose ethics are concerned with the

*people* and their welfare alone, and thus as an innovative theory of the universal. In fact, says Hegel, such an approach does nothing but abjure the infinite complexity brought on by the concept of right and the necessity of *law*: being a 'friend of the people' necessitates reducing the subjective and unbridgeable propensities and interests of humans which can be navigated only through the rational expression of phenomena and the reasoning out of the paradigms that can construct a system for the body social. This action is called in Hegel *actualizing*, and far from erecting a "cold and dead letter" that "shackles" the individual in society, actualization allows freedom, for freedom is the ability to *recognize* one's freedom; the law is thus the "reason of the thing and reason does not allow feeling to warm itself in the glow of its own particularity" (*PR*, 17).

The political philosophy expounded in *Philosophy of Right* is the ethical field upon which the tension between the demands and the constraints of the universal and the particular is played out. The contemplation of truth as contingent and therefore futile scientific object of inquiry is deemed by Hegel as despotism, comparable to that exercised by Roman emperors who removed all distinctions – between virtue and vice, knowledge and ignorance (as well as between patricians and slaves) – resulting in a confounding reversal of the status of the laws of ethics, which they perceived as opinions and as the "most criminal principles." What saves philosophy from "spin[ning] itself into its own web of *scholastic wisdom*" is precisely its unfaltering contiguity with actuality, which concerns the principles of the present and the real in all their gravity, and which therefore demonstrates that the exploration of the rational is inherently joined to the substance of the real. This law of ethics claims not at all

that what is actual is as it *ought to be*; rather than aver – as critics do – that the Idea is but representation or conviction, Hegel's philosophy apprehends the Idea as the *only* actual object, which enables us to recognize "in the semblance of the temporal and transient – [the actual, the particular] – the substance which is immanent and the eternal which is present – [the rational and universal]" (*PR*, 20).[13] In fact, the removal of actual, finite content amounts to an endorsement of evil itself.

**Evil in Transcendence**

In her discussion of Hegel, Susan Nieman notes that his elaboration of human alienation reflects the thoroughly modern feature of his thought. Moreover, his insistence on the elimination of contingency does not indicate a return to a Leibniz-like conflation of the 'is' and the 'ought'; rather, the will to remove contingency epitomized by the randomness of life and death is a "will to be *effectively* moral" and is thus properly modern.[14] Nieman points out that moral evil for Hegel is but an instance of natural evil since humans are part of nature. Thus, regarding contingency in history as necessarily implying progress and advance toward human freedom is, Nieman rightly remarks, no more a paradoxical attempt at understanding the function of necessity and contingency than others.

Nieman recalls Leibniz's category of metaphysical evil pertaining to the flaws integral to all created things; these flaws represent the constitutive finitude of created beings. Nieman's claim that Hegel's rejection of finitude attests to his conception of evil in metaphysical terms is based on passages from the *Introduction to the Lectures*

*on the Philosophy of World History* in which he writes that philosophical investigation "can be seen as a theodicy, a justification of the ways of God […]. It should enable us to comprehend all the ills of the World, including the existence of evil, so that the thinking spirit may yet be reconciled with the negative aspects of existence; and it is in world history that we encounter the sum total of evil."[15] According to Nieman, Hegel's appeal to reason found not only meaning in history but also sense in evil, particularly through the logic of the values of recognition and work which operates in the dialectic of the master and the slave.

Richard Bernstein's analysis of the conception of radical evil in Hegel focuses on the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (and the *Science of Logic*) and thus sustains the religious categories within which Hegel himself confined much of the discussion.[16] But in his study of evil Bernstein offers an exposition on Hegel's distinction between the finite and the infinite that can help further to elucidate the ambiguous equation that identifies the real with rational.

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel lays out the definition of the finite and infinite and their relation with the 'ought' using his systematic categories:

> The thought of the finitude of things brings this sadness with it because it is qualitative negation pushed to its extreme, and in the singleness of such determination there is no longer left to things an affirmative being *distinct* from their destiny to perish […]. The finite, it is true, lest itself be brought into flux, it is itself this, to be determined or destined to its end, but only to its end — or rather, it is the refusal to let itself be brought affirmatively to its affirmative, to the infinite, and to let itself be united with it; it is therefore

> posited as inseparable from its nothing, and is thereby cut off from all reconciliation with its other, the affirmative. The determination or destiny of finite things takes them no further than their *end.* The understanding persists in this sadness of finitude by making non-being the determination of things and at the same time making it *imperishable and absolute.* Their transitoriness could only pass away or perish in their other, in the affirmative; their finitude would then be parted from them; but it is their unalterable quality, that is, their quality which does not pass over into its other, that is, into its affirmative; *it is thus eternal* (*SL*, § 250).
>
> This is a very important consideration; but certainly no philosophy or opinion, or understanding, will let itself be tied to the standpoint that the finite is absolute (*SL*, § 251).[17]

We think of finitude as one (individual) being absolutely distinguished from another and the very thought of our finitude and solitude is cause for sadness. However, every finite being is not only dependent on another; its very finitude is conditioned on the idea of its other – its 'affirmative' or the transcendent and the infinite. And this very dependence and necessary interaction destabilizes the category of finitude: "In order that the limit which is in something as such should be a limitation, something must at the same time in its own self transcend the limit, it must in its own self *be related to the limit as to something which is not*" (*SL,* § 255).

In the same manner, Hegel conceives of the 'ought' as a moral category whose very positing demonstrates its finite rather than transcendent attribute:

> What ought to be *is,* and at the same time *is not.* If it *were, we* could not say

> that it *ought* merely *to be*. The ought has, therefore, essentially a limitation. This limitation is not alien to it; that which only ought to be is the *determination,* which is now posited as it is in fact, namely, as at the same time only a determinateness (*SL*, § 258).

The logical failure of which Hegel in fact accuses his fellow metaphysicians is the claim that limitations on reason and thought cannot be transcended: "To make such as assertion is to be unaware that the very fact that something is determined as a limitation implies that the limitation is already transcended" (*SL*, § 265).

In fact the infinite as excluded and external from the finite is an abstraction that stands in for an empty idea of transcendence and sustains a dualism that is dishonest: "The finite, in the broadest sense maintaining itself as finite and autonomous, over against and thereby in conflict with the infinite or the universal, is what is evil."[18] To revert to a doctrine that sustains a gap between the finite and the infinite is not only philosophically flawed but morally reprobate. The infinite thus participates in the dialectic in its full affirmative sense:

> a) in its *simple determination,* affirmative as negation of the finite
>
> (b) but thus it is in *alternating determination* with the *finite,* and is the abstract, *one-sided* infinite
>
> (c) the self-sublation of this infinite and of the finite, as a *single* process -- this is the *true or genuine infinite* (*SL*, § 272).

Achieving an ethical philosophy resides in realizing that any attempt to pit the finite against an external infinite results in the apprehension of an infinite that is "spurious": "it will be found that in the very act of keeping the infinite pure and aloof from the

finite, the infinite is only made finite" (*SL*, § 271). This view expresses Hegel's criticism of Kant's moral position in which Kant distinguishes between the two, a position which stymies the comprehension of contradictions in life and thus impedes a (rational) confrontation with contradictory situations inherent to the real: "This *unity* of the finite and infinite and the *distinction* between them are just as inseparable as are finitude and infinity" (*SL*, § 315).[19]

Bernstein reminds us that Hegel's positing of evil as a necessary moment in the speculative understanding of knowledge is based on the biblical story of the Fall. Through this "eternal history of humanity" Hegel affirms that knowledge is bound up with the rupture that engenders consciousness and with evil in so far as evil consists of the conscious choice to remain divided from the world, residing in (unhappy) separation from spirit. This deliberate isolation amounts to a denial that the finite is inseparable from the infinite or that "within itself the affirmative is self-contradictory and wounded."[20] Even if, therefore, evil as condition is a necessary moment in the dialectic of good and evil within the ongoing movement toward reconciliation which is life itself, it is the reification of finitude and the clinging to an intractable dualism that constitute human evil conceived by Hegel as deliberate. Bernstein accepts the fundamentally dialectical logic of Hegel's moral judgment and concedes that Hegel does not attempt to explain away concrete evil in reality, but his view toward Hegel's disregard or omission of empirical examples of evil in the world remains unconvinced: "it seems strained and artificial to classify them [human atrocities] as instances of the reification of the antithesis of the finite and the spurious infinite."[21]

Bernstein's criticism is directed at Hegel's exemplifying yet again the failure

of philosophy to confront reality on its own terms and to equip us not only with sufficiently solid philosophical logic but, more crucially, with an ethical frame of analysis that does not solely seek to reconcile and unify experience through a classificatory system, and that does not look for redemption and healing where none is thinkable. (Bernstein invokes Auschwitz and Rwanda as epitomizing non-redeemable human evil.) The epitome of philosophy's illusory proclamations, writes Bernstein, is conjured by Hegel's declaration in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that "[t]he wounds of spirit heal and leave no scars behind."[22]

This statement has been the object of numerous analyses from Hegel's followers in phenomenology to non-Hegelian thinkers. The current chapter cannot provide yet another reading of the theoretical morality of Hegel's claim.[23] However, what seems to me the crucial focus in Hegel's dialectical conception is the absolutely inextricable relation between good and evil, together with the ethical questions to be drawn from this proposition. For if the relation is universal and inherent to humanity, it exists empirically in every human and thus it is incumbent on the individual consciousness (the individual being) to confront the difficult truth of its workings, the workings of the formation of consciousness: "Inasmuch as it is spirit, humanity has to progress to this antithesis of being-for-itself as such […]. In this separation being-for-itself is posited and evil has its seat; here is the source of all wrong, but also the point where reconciliation has its ultimate source. It is what produces the disease and it is at the same time the source of its health."[24] The language of ailment and infirmity is endemic to any true discussion of life, as is the language of contradiction because "contradiction is the *root of all movement and vitality*; it is only in so far as something

has a contradiction within it that it moves, has an urge and activity" (*SL*, § 956).

Good and evil, then, when understood as "intelligent thought" opposed to "ordinary thought," consist in the extent to which contradictions are acknowledged and understood. Ordinary thinking holds opposites "over against one another and has in mind *only them*, but not their *transition*, which is the essential point and which contains the contradiction," while intelligent thinking consists in asserting contradictions. Moreover, and crucially, even non-philosophers – beings who are not privy to the logic of science and the laws reason can edify – have the capacity to make the moral judgment that is impotent without allocating the proper weight to contradictions:

> Even though it [intelligent thinking] does not express the Notion of things and their relationships and has for its material and content only the determinations of ordinary thinking, it does bring these into a relation that contains their contradiction and allows *their Notion to show or shine through* the contradiction. Thinking reason, however, sharpens, so to say, the blunt difference of diverse terms, the mere manifoldness of pictorial thinking, into *essential* difference, into *opposition*. Only when the manifold terms have been driven to the point of contradiction do they become active and lively towards one another, receiving in contradiction the negativity which is the indwelling pulsation of self-movement and spontaneous activity (*SL*, § 961).

True philosophical science must refrain from embroiling itself in narcissistic and arrogant doctrines that comment on the infinity of forms and circumstances organized within an external reality. Science will escape the hate which the "vanity of

superior wisdom" displays toward the multitude of circumstances and institutions: "a hatred in which pettiness takes the greatest of pleasure, because this is the only way in which it can attain self-esteem" (*PR*, 21). The philosophy or science of politics seeks to "*comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity*," not in order to construct it as it *ought* to be, but rather to recognize the ethical hypotheses inherent to social structures and procurable through the organization of the state.

This is why Hegel concludes the preface of the *Philosophy of Right* by returning to a more concrete comment on the dialectical relation of form and content in a *unity*. *Form* is "reason as conceptual cognition, and *content* is the substantial essence of both ethical and natural actuality; the conscious identity of the two is the philosophical Idea" and actuality is the only manner in which appearance and essence can be determined. Just as the conception of a world bisected into two segregated domains of a mundane if (imagined) manageable finitude over against a mysterious if (fantasized) sublime is a misguided thought, so is the severing of conceptual thought from the manifested world an act of renunciation. "To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present" (the image, as the translator clarifies, may have been suggested to Hegel by a reference to a secret religious society whose proverb implies etymologically that one reaches the divine, the 'rose') is possible only through the suffering of an earthly 'cross.'[25] This rational recognition of reason as *thing*, and thus as the imperative to "delight in the present" is precisely captured by Lacan who reminds us in *Seminar I* of Hegel's articulation between the concept and its absolute grasp by philosophy: "[T]he concept is the time of the thing. To be sure, the concept is not the thing as it is, for the simple reason that the concept is always where the

thing isn't, it is there to replace the thing."[26]

"In it [actuality], *formless* essence and *unstable* Appearance, or mere subsistence devoid of all determination and unstable manifoldness, have their truth" (*SL*, § 1158). In no way does the rational dictate the real as it ought to be; on the contrary, the rational understands the real in its formlessness, instability, and contingencies. At the most, it can offer us the picture of our action as reason, as an unscrambling of the real which is "*pregnant with content*" (*SL*, § 1211), leaving us with the choice of sorting out between what is only posited as necessary, and what can be consciously actualized, that is, what is at our control when we know of the real and its contingencies.

The culture, "the grandest and the last," which undertook the task of distinguishing between empty necessity and real possibility, and which subsumed all particular essences, complexities of thoughts, and goals within a global consciousness of "universal freedom," is the culture of the French Revolution. The Revolution rejected the positing of content – wealth, nation, Enlightenment – in the empty place that Hegelian self-consciousness understood as the (ethical) subject. But it insisted on establishing itself as the culture of 'pure abstraction,' and as such received no positive content and could not give something in return for the renunciation of particular 'determinations': "its negation is the death that is without meaning, the sheer terror of the negative that contains nothing positive, nothing that fills it with a content." This famous passage from the *Phenomenology* instantiates the devastating consequence of the prohibition decreed on the dialectical movement against pursuing its *rational* course: the next moment in its determination as 'pure revolution', its actualization in

grounded institutions and law (in Hegel's idiom "negation of the negation"), is eliminated from immediate and *actual* reality, and the subject of the absolute will turns into an absolute positivity of "pure knowing and willing" but perceives itself as nothing but "a selfless form" devoid of the outstanding remainder and excess of being – objective reality.[27]

**Interpreting the Historical Moment**

The death that is the 'sheer terror of the negative' is the well-known and direct reference to the revolutionary Terror in the France of 1793. The French Revolution and its Terror presented the philosopher with a veritable challenge. It took place fourteen years before the publication of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and twenty-eight years before the *Philosophy of Right*. The effort of the French revolutionaries to actualize history, grounded, as that effort clearly was, in Enlightenment principles, cannot but loom large in Hegel's determination of that aspect of the identity of the rational and the actual that constitutes the role of reason in history.

For the French historian Mona Ozouf, the task of the modern thinker is not only to listen to the demand of an "innocent [archival] contact with the past as it really was," a demand generated by a fatigue from the abundant body of historiographic discourse; in addition, she writes, we must be the readers of the commentaries written by those whose works are nearly contemporaneous with the event.[28] Her essay focuses on works by such post-Thermidorian writers as Lindet, Lezay-Marnésia, as well as Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël. The first two offer an interpretation that oscillates between the force of circumstance and human

will as chief grounds for the Terror. The historical hesitation and philosophical weakness of their interpretation prompted Constant and Staël to articulate a rigorous relation between necessity and circumstance.

Staël and Constant labor to reject the notion of both the categorical and the deductive necessity of Terror as the inevitable consequence of the Revolution; relying on comparisons with other revolutions, demonstrating the petrifying effect of the Terror on public opinion, establishing a clear line of demarcation between crimes or "terrorisms" among participators and perpetrators all lead the writers to grant significance to the careful study of circumstances that persisted and emerged in the course of the Revolution. But the relentless interpreters refuse to dissolve the Terror entirely into particular circumstances, and they ultimately return to the problematic explanation of principles: for if they concede the necessary advance of mankind through revolution, how can they situate the Terror that is explainable neither by circumstances nor as a necessary response to events?

Their answer is intriguing for us, as readers of Hegel. Briefly, says Ozouf, the destruction was brought on by the time lag between ideas and readiness, events and perception and public sentiment. This lack of adequation in the Revolution induced extremism and fanaticism, mechanisms most amenable to control. But if this interpretation reintroduces the argument of necessity, it also shows that terror is that which premises itself on a system of virtue. And these, says Ozouf, may be "the most profound words written on the Terror."[29]

Hanna Arendt, in her work *On Revolution*, concedes that for philosophy, or rather theory, the French Revolution served as a model of inspiration of the highest

degree in precipitating "the birth of the modern concept of history in Hegel's philosophy."[30] She credits Hegel with formulating the "revolutionary idea that the absolute of philosophy revealed itself in the realm of human affairs," and this against the hitherto held notion of absolute standards. Arendt's criticism of Hegel, however, derives from the unchanging speculative nature of his attempt to comprehend conceptually the experience of his time. The principal "fallacy" in her mind is displacing all that is political – acts, words, events – into a philosophy of history. What enables this betrayal is a conception of human action in terms of the spectator who watches a spectacle, negating the role of the actor or agent who is thus stripped of the capacity to understand the lesson of the Revolution. The shift of perspective had repercussions throughout all subsequent revolutions: the course of the French Revolution had become a historical necessity that dictated future revolutionaries even as they saw themselves as agents of history.

The transformation of truth from the conception of an absolute standard to a historically-situated concept, while relinquishing its validity in time, maintained its validity for man *qua* man in order to acquire philosophical "dignity," but not as man *qua* citizen or national. That is, says Arendt, not as political agent.

Another no less important target of Arendt's criticism is Hegel's famous dialectic of freedom and necessity, whose elaboration is not the task of this chapter, but which, for Arendt, carries the responsibility for the dismal outcome of nineteenth- and twentieth-century revolutions. The notion of historical necessity cast "a magic spell" over the minds of subsequent revolutionaries, who learned in the school of revolution that the revolution must devour its own children, and they could not but

imitate the *course* of events rather than the *men* of the French Revolution. “Had they taken the men of the Revolution as their models, they would have protested their innocence to their last breath.”[31]

Arendt sees the failure of the French Revolution in the shift of its goals: the social question, she says, compelled the leaders to renounce the principles of its initial stages, namely, the institutions and constitutions which to Saint-Just were ‘the soul of the Republic.’[32] “When the impoverished multitude appeared on the scene of the Revolution’s politics, necessity appeared with it, unleashing the Terror, and sending the Revolution to its doom.” The reason the new republic was “stillborn” is that “freedom had to be surrendered to necessity.” [33]

While Ozouf searches for voices contemporaneous with the Revolution so as to tune ever more finely the Revolution’s own recounting and retelling, to open one more door to its monumental effect as a *rent* in, or of, modernity, Arendt’s political philosophy is staunchly historical. Arendt’s thesis is political freedom, that is, “participation in public affairs, or admission to the public realm,” as the necessary principle in the outcome of a successful revolution. She traces the origins of this definition to the Greek *polis* in order to ground the distinction between *liberty*, or liberation from physical or existential infringements by oppressive governments, and *freedom*, which necessitates the constitution of a republic.

It is in the understanding of freedom that we can challenge Arendt’s criticism of Hegel. Robert Stern offers a discerning examination of the traditional understanding of Hegel’s treatment of the French Revolution which centers on Rousseau’s conception of contracterianism, the general will, and freedom. Stern

points out that despite the numerous references to Rousseau in the *Phenomenology*, and the fundamental disagreement between the two thinkers on the question of the legitimacy of representation, there is a much more coherent discussion of the Revolution in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, where there is no mention of Rousseau. It is through the elaboration of the ethical that Hegel isolates the tension in our conception of freedom, or the willing subject. Indeed, with sharp scrutiny he establishes the contradictory subject positions: the "finite" and "particularized" differentiated choice-maker, against the subject as "infinite" and "universal" that aspires to totality.[34]

The French Revolution is a historical event that incarnates the position of the absolute, which, moreover, sees anything that is "particular" or "determinate" as a limitation on its freedom. Hegel's own words are exceptionally concrete here:

Only *one aspect* of the will is defined here – namely this *absolute possibility* of *abstracting* from every determination in which I find myself or in which I have posited in myself, the flight from every content as a limitation […] – This is the freedom of the void, which is raised to the status of an actual shape and passion […]. It is precisely through the annihilation of particularity [both of institutions and of individuals] […] that the self-consciousness of this negative freedom arises. Thus, whatever such freedom believes that it wills can in itself be no more than an abstract representation […] and its actualization can only be the fury of destruction […]. [During] the Reign of Terror in the French Revolution […] all differences of talents and authority are supposed to be cancelled out. This was a time of trembling and quaking and of intolerance towards everything particular. For fanaticism wills only

what is abstract, not what is articulated, so that whenever differences emerge, it finds them incompatible with its own indeterminacy […]. This is why the people, during the French Revolution, destroyed once more the institutions they had themselves created, because all institutions are incompatible with the abstract self-consciousness of equality (*PR*, 38-39).

Rather than expounding on Hegel's opposition to Rousseau as the motivating force behind his criticism of the revolutionary mode of legislative representation, Stern focuses on Hegel's treatment of 'freedom' both as formal and ontological determination. While Rousseau expresses anxieties and fears concerning the usurpation of sovereignty by the representatives from 'the people' (the general will), Hegel is intent on comprehending the structural flaw of a fundamentally social project predicated on vast intellectual theoretization. In so doing he points to the processes that generate and nourish ideological systems that validate the identification of their subjects with a universal consciousness. The reigning regime champions the abolition of differentiation, but not on behalf of an equality between particular social groups; the outcome of their doctrine of freedom posits consciousness itself as its object. Thus the antithesis that enables the subject to apprehend its alterity and then return to itself is but a 'semblance' of an antithesis:

> In this absolute freedom, therefore, all social groups or classes which are the spiritual spheres into which the whole is articulated are abolished; the individual consciousness that belonged to any such sphere, and willed and fulfilled itself in it, has put aside its limitations; its purpose is the general purpose, its language universal law, its work the universal work (*PS*, 357).

Although out of the fear of death the individual can adapt and come to occupy a specific role within the state, the seemingly restored social order is nothing but a return to the old, with one more significant problem which now characterizes modernity: modern consciousness, having realized its power in universality, that is, the destruction of all particularities, finds itself alienated from the very structures that make up the state – its institutions, social roles, representational structures. It is this understanding of the institutional framework of the state, namely as the organism capable of a rational synthesis between universal reason and particular human actualities, that came under Marx's criticism in his political philosophy.

**Marx's Transformative Criticism**

The project of the *Philosophy of Right* is to channel the reflection of the modern subject from his alienation and the anarchy that may ensue – including anarchy of direct democracy – into a world where roles and institutions need not restrain the subject's sense of universality, but rather enable and strengthen conditions and resources for an ethical human freedom that relies on social structures. But this point of departure of Hegel's work – to apprehend the present and the actual as represented by the state which is itself portrayed as inherently rational – is the object of Marx's criticism in his *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Hegel, Marx says, drew an impeccably coherent analysis of the modern (Prussian) state and its contemporary reality through a process of negation of past forms of consciousness in law and politics sanctioned by the elevated status of a science. Speculative philosophy of right is a system of thought that is and could only be envisaged in the

historically – philosophically and politically – specific terrain of Germany. The German "thought-version" of the modern state in fact abstracts itself from the actuality of man as a social being and therefore has but an imaginary conception of man.[35] It disregards the multifarious schemes making up historical reality, and its "stunted" thinking is manifest as a syndrome. It is not of empirical inaccuracy that Marx accuses Hegel but rather of adhering to a mystical account in the speculative logic by which it proceeds. Weaving all philosophical questioning into a logical fabric whose pattern is the inevitable manifestation of the self-knowing of the absolute amounts to defining all social and political institutions in terms of particular modes of the Idea which is thus the fundamental concept in a first-order logic.

For Marx, Hegelian (idealist) philosophy suffers from a structural flaw which is the necessary outcome of a theory predicated on the infinite – the transcendent absolute Idea. All speculation over notions such as right, freedom, will or even the rational cannot be premised on the logical relation where the infinite is subject, and man, or the finite and the actual, is predicate. Marx opens his critique by demonstrating the inherent error committed by speculative philosophy which determines the 'rationality of the state' as the organizing logic which presupposes the actual spheres of family and civil society as two ideal spheres of its concept. Marx directs his criticism at Hegel's characterization of the state as an extraneous, ideal and pre-eminent concept, detached from its material division into family and civil society:

> [T]he logical, pantheistic mysticism appears very clearly. The actual situation is that the assignment of the material of the state to the individual is mediated by circumstances, caprice, and personal choice of his station in life. This fact,

> this actual situation is expressed by speculative philosophy as appearance. As phenomen[a…these] actual mediation[s] are merely the appearance of a mediation which the actual Idea undertakes with itself and goes behind the scenes. The Idea is given the status of a subject, and the actual relationship of family and civil society to the state is conceived to be its inner imaginary activity […]. But if the Idea is made subject, then the real subjects – civil society, family, circumstances, caprice, etc. – become unreal, and take on the different meaning of objective moments of the Idea.[36]

Against the Hegelian presupposition that the empirical world is but a manifestation of the absolute essence and the determinate elements of political society are particular modes of the Idea which alone is the acting principle, Marx proposes a 'transformative criticism' which inverts the subject-predicate relation.[37] What is actual for Marx is the 'circumstantial' human being and his institutions, purposes and power which are the true determining subject, the producer and condition of empirical reality.

Marx argues that Hegel bases his analysis of the state as a rational Absolute on a scientific philosophy which he had formulated in the *Science of Logic*, thereby attributing the highest (absolute) value to the idea of the state (or the state as idea) while designating civil society and the family as moments in its development. Actual human deeds are reduced, Marx claims, to appearances: finite, phenomenal beings who serve as mere vessels for the realization of the idea. But as we recall, it was precisely in the *Science of Logic* that Hegel asserted the futility of distinguishing between the finite and the infinite, a duality which remains an empty abstraction,

"dishonest" (therefore unethical), and "evil." Hegel, if read on his own terms, provides a logic rejecting a mystical reduction of individual man, his family, and his finite, empirical institutions, as well as the elevation of the idea to an eminence of transcendent infinity.

In his critique Marx returns to Rousseau's distinction between *homme privé* and *citoyen* as the generative cause of alienation of man within the modern political state. In Hegel's reading, the failure of the French Revolution is rooted in the separation between the organized framework of the state and the individual who withdrew to an increasingly alienated private sphere. This confinement elicited an apprehension of the state as a consummate and sublime ministry presiding within an extrinsic realm of universality. This estrangement is intrinsic to modern society and (as conceived by Hegel) flagrantly opposed to the social form of the Greek city-state which offered a political engagement to its citizens. A Greek citizen could construct an identity between the two categories of *homme* and *citoyen*. Since the actuality of the real world demands recognition of the dual reality of the two opposing spheres, public and private, the only rational confrontation (in Marx's reading of Hegel) is a theoretization of the state as a synthesis of the two realms which moreover dwell within an interdependent relation.

Marx undoubtedly found Hegel's socio-political understanding of Greek antiquity not as discerning as his schematization of the political structure of the modern state; at the same time, the very premise of the *Philosophy of Right* and its theoretical hypotheses serve as the framework of Marx's critical thesis.[38] In that respect, his critique is famously and immanently dialectical and does not escape the

theoretical principles of negativity. It is precisely the accuracy of Hegel's portrayal of the modern state epitomized by contemporary Prussia which demonstrates, according to Marx, the necessary contradiction inherent in a political structure which upholds and perpetuates the alienating schism between political state and civil society.[39]

An interesting point in Marx's critique is the problematization of the tension in the relation between the legislature and the constitution. Marx targets his critique directly at the antinomy staged by political reality in post-1789 France: a series of constitutions were adapted and overthrown, and even the constitution of 1793 – the *montagnarde* – was ratified but never applied. The constitution in Hegel subsumes the legislature, and is presupposed by it and therefore lies outside the sphere which it determines – the legislature; at the same time, Marx remarks that only with the legislature does Hegel conceive of a coherent constitution and therefore cannot presuppose it. The collision is far from theoretical: in the aftermath of the French Revolution all constitutional drafts were violently changed or overthrown by an extra-constitutional and thus extra-legal power.[40]

Let us reproduce the passage in Hegel quoted by Marx for he performs an intriguing close reading of a question which bears upon the dialectic of philosophy and politics:

> The *legislative power* has to do with the laws as such, in so far as they are in need of new and further determination, and with those internal concerns of the state whose content is wholly universal. This power is itself a part of the constitution, which it presupposes and which to that extent lies in and for itself outside the sphere which the legislative power can determine directly; but the

> constitution does undergo further development through the further evolution of the laws and the progressive character of the universal concerns of government.
>
> *Addition*. The constitution must be in and for itself the firm and recognized ground on which the legislative power is based, so that it does not first have to be constructed. Thus, the constitution *is*, but it just as essentially becomes, i.e. it undergoes progressive development. This progression is a change which takes place imperceptibly and without possessing the form of change.[41]

Marx argues that the constitution cannot be at once the product of the legislature and its law, that is, have the ability to subsume the legislature. This antinomy has only been replaced by Hegel with another antinomy, which allows the constitution to be at one and the same time a finished and existing totality *and* an evolving entity in the process of becoming – modified by the legislature. In its first state, argues Marx, the constitution is a hypothetical – and illusory – law, whereas in the second an empirical and true reality. Hegel has maintained a contradiction between what the legislature's legal action should be, and what it really does.

The ontological impossibility of becoming and of inalterability points to a contradiction between appearance and essence. Indeed, Marx's language demonstrates the materialization of this paradox in the field of consciousness: "The appearance is the conscious law of the constitution [inalterability], and the essence is its unconscious law [change], which contradicts the other." The nature of the thing itself (change) is not written into the law (the constitution). In that case, is the logical reality such that blind, unpredictable, and 'natural' law is what governs in the state

and not ineffable law of self-conscious reason? Otherwise, asks Marx, if the law is reason although it contradicts its legal definition, why is reason not declared by Hegel as the law of the state? "And how then consciously retain this dualism?"[42]

In the preface Hegel offers the first of several citations of Plato: although Plato's thought was embedded in Greek ethics and thus limited in its foresight of the deep principle of subjective freedom, which is the principle of "*self-sufficient and inherently infinite personality* of the individual" (the ability of the subject to reflect on and enjoy his freedom), he was aware that this principle was penetrating his culture's consciousness (*PR*, 22, 222-23).[43] Plato, in his greatness, had sensed the destructive force in the consciousness of particularity – its contingent arbitrariness, indulgent caprices, and subjective interests; but since the conceptual awareness of a reflexive disposition, which allows the opposition within reason, the division within subjectivity, to enter consciousness in acceptance, or "to wholly contain it within itself," was not within reach to him, he could only preserve it in an Idea, even *ideal*, of an organic state in which all members are affected by the acts and sentiments of each individual.[44]

Precisely because Plato's "greatness of spirit" derives from the "pivot on which the impending world revolution turned," it serves as the condition for and sanction of the necessity to explore the real against a 'world beyond'. Thus it introduces the dictum articulating the ontological identity – or dependence – between the rational and the actual which is a logical consequence of the failure of Greek ethics. When Marx bitterly criticizes Hegel's contradictory formulation of the status of the constitution – in the paragraph cited above, he cannot accept 'lackadaisical'

passages conceiving of law as existent in absentia, a *conscious* but *illusory* essence, whereas in *reality* law is perceived in its becoming – its change and evolution are imperceptible and thus *unconscious*.

Indeed in the preface Hegel insists that the business of designating and regulating the infinite external circumstances and organizations which give shape to the essence of the Idea is not the subject-matter of philosophy. Philosophy must not concern itself with what ought to be the response to the question of ethics. Instead, it should expose, by comprehending it, the structure of the ethical question as such; Hegel's conclusion that "the constitution *is*, but it just as essentially becomes," constitutes an insurmountable antinomy for Marx, but for Hegel the two ontological states of being and becoming are not mutually exclusive. In fact this contradiction, to follow Žižek's understanding of the reverse logic of the dialectic, is itself that which constitutes the answer to the question – in this case the status of law.

In other words, the antagonism between the law as a fixed and recognized ground on which the legislature stands, and the law as essentially subject to advance and maturation, is the fundamental antagonism which *constitutes* the law.[45] Marx's question thus is its own answer (quoted above): "The appearance is the conscious law of the constitution [its being], and the essence is its unconscious law [its becoming], which contradicts the other." The incommensurability discloses the truth that law can only both *be* and *become* in order to overcome the logical antinomy, and this 'dual' state manifests the ethical relationship between the rational (conscious, fixed, recognized) and actual (unconscious, imperceptible, changing, mutating). The Hegelian terminology of the negation of the negation objectifies the primal

contradiction within propositional logic of opposition: the transgression of law which is the constitution as determined in its being, is its own negation in the concealed and unsanctioned, 'unconstitutional' violence (of change).

Žižek writes that the Marxist dialectic of the revolutionary process overlooks Hegel's insistence (in the well-known declaration of the Preface) on the belatedness of the owl of Minerva that takes flight in the evening, after the fact. The revolutionary subject is constituted through his act, rather than manage the act from an established external position of stable knowledge – his "'subjective illusion'" is part of the "'objective' act itself."[46] That is why for Hegel "[b]y repetition that which at first appeared merely a matter of chance and contingency, becomes a real and ratified existence."[47] Hegel refers here to the transformative status of the ruler in the Roman Republic: from Caesar (the ruler carrying the name) who wanted to consolidate his power to *a* caesar, the title of the first ruler (Augustus) of the Roman Empire after Caesar's assassination. Interpretation (of a revolutionary act) necessarily arrives belatedly, when its repetition injects it with meaning. The Hegelian repetition, writes Žižek, "signifies simultaneously the passage from contingency to necessity and the passage from unconscious substance to consciousness."[48] Similarly, the changing and adapting essence of the constitution gains its 'absoluteness' in the very pass from the unconscious (hypothetical and 'illusory') state to a consciousness of the significance of its stability. In this dialectic the constitution becomes an opening for the productive relationship between adaptive change and reliable stability. The failure to oppose the two states absolutely is what Hegel considers a success – the belated interpretation of the act recognizes that there is a structural impossibility to a moment where truth is in

complete correspondence with itself: revolution with just law, constitution with an all-knowing and eternal validity.

Marx castigates Hegel's structural contradiction that manifests itself ideologically: "[T]he question is simply this: Does a people have the right to give itself a new constitution? The answer must be an unqualified yes, because the constitution becomes a practical illusion the moment it ceases to be a true expression of the people's will."[49] But what Marx does not probe is the *origin* of law, the unauthorized, unlawful usurpation of law, the violence which generates and empowers the new mongrel and bestows power on it: "The legislature does not make the law, it merely discovers and formulates it." The greatness of the French Revolution for Marx is the production of "great organic, universal revolutions" by the legislature, which was the representative of the people, and which sought to change only the degenerate version of the constitution, not the constitution as such.

But revolutionary terror was understood by Hegel to be the result of condensing the subject into an abstract *citizen* and disregarding the particular "thoughts and views of the *many*." The rational (and hence ethical) logic of the dialectic is the recognition that for law to sustain itself not only through a dissimulation of its violent nature, but rather as the rational and coherent social system designed to provide the individual with creative and expressive coordinates, there must be an understanding of the loss that is incurred in the ontology of law: the subject must be able to *posit* the surplus that is lost in the becoming of law, in its perpetual displacement, delays and maturation. The constitution follows the same necessary modification as substance does in its becoming subject – the agitations and

discomposure as well as insurrection constitute the truth of law in so far as law is conceived as *right*, even if in the attaining of objectivity within itself, particularity passes into universality through an arduous and laborious process of education. This process is essential since "[t]o know what one wills, and even more, to know what the will which has being in and for itself – i.e. reason – wills, is the fruit of profound cognition and insight, and this is the very thing which 'the people' lack" (*PR*, 340).

Indeed, what provokes Marx's ire throughout the *Critique* and elicits his indignant judgment of hypocrisy in the *Philosophy of Right* – the inevitable consequence of an abstraction which disregards its own antinomies – is the systematic disregard on the part of Hegel of the status of the people or 'public affairs': he charges Hegel with denying public consciousness the autonomy of subject while granting the state (the sovereign/executive, the legislature) – or in Marx's words "the degenerate form of bureaucracy" – an idealized essence. Hegel proposes the Assembly of Estates (body of delegates representing various civil and political elements) as a bridge between *homme* and *citoyen*:

> The role of the Estates is to bring the universal interest into existence not only *in itself* but *for itself*, i.e. to bring into existence the moment of subjective *formal freedom*, the public consciousness as the empirical universality of the views and thoughts of the many (*PR*, 339).

Marx refers to Hegel's proposition of the Estates as the "enigma of mysticism" and accuses Hegel of bolstering the illusion that the Estates will truly represent the people. The false abstraction accords the executive instance "in the degenerate form of bureaucracy" full-valued essence while the empirical public consciousness is

rendered as a “mere potpourri” of the thoughts of the many. Even if Marx is right to say that “Hegel idealizes the bureaucracy,” it is not clear why the converse of this claim as stated by Marx – “and empiricizes public consciousness” – is a disparagement of the people.

The moral sleight of hand which characterizes Hegel’s commentary on the intellectual capacity and standing of the poor and uneducated – to whose attitude he refers as “rabble mentality” – disconcerts Marx who cannot but distrust the genuineness of Hegel’s concern for empirical subjects. Knowles remarks that Hegel’s “contempt of the masses” discloses his understanding that their moral degeneracy attests to the insufficient, indeed diseased organism of the state, incapable of delivering the goods of the ethical interests to its less than pious and abiding subjects.[50] The philosophical rigor which the public lacks necessarily refutes the credibility of public opinion, freedom of the press, or the Marxian universal suffrage. Although Knowles shares Marx’s skepticism of the philosophical validity of an autocratic doctrine, he briefly comments that it may be argued that in Hegel being uneducated does not inherently imply being deprived of the right to freedom – even in the case of those who cannot ‘recognize the rational in the actual.’ He nevertheless contends that an essential flaw characterizes a philosophy of right premised on two radically disparate modalities of subjective freedom: the ethical self-contradiction cannot be redeemed by the power of the dialectic.

Wood offers a more discerning discussion of Hegel’s hard-headed treatment of civil society and the predicament of its underprivileged members; he points out that in Hegel’s dialectical system of categories, all finite spheres – including the

rational state – face the effect of their constitutive transitoriness, contingency and imperfection and will pass, through dissolution, to a different state. Thus the *Philosophy of Right* as a coherent textual work is structured along the finite stages and development of reason's manifestation in civil society: Abstract Right ends with the Wrong and passes to Morality, which ends with Hypocrisy; the Family and its members end in Civil Society; and States in historical realms self-destroy in war. Since the task of sustaining the rationality of an ethical order is compromised by a reality of a society which "systematically produces a class whose existence violates that principle, then that tends to undermine the rationality of the ethical order as a whole."[51]

Indeed for Hegel, the alienated mentality of the rabble, its bitter rejection of rights and duties, even if rationally justifying the self-destruction of the system through its own principles, do not invite or legitimize an act of revolution against the old principles. But the state is part of the dialectic and just as state institutions provide a stable environment for the empirical and finite subjects to actualize their interests and creativeness, so do finite institutions conform to a rational form fashioned and modified by free individuals. Hegel does not, as Marx claims, "take refuge from […] real conflict in an imaginary organic unity."[52] The world of conflict and contingency stands at the forefront of his vision:

> Since states function as *particular* entities in their mutual relations, the broadest view of these relations will encompass the ceaseless turmoil not just of external contingency, but also of passions, interests, ends, talents and virtues, violence, wrongdoing, and vices in their inner particularity. In this

> turmoil, the ethical whole itself – the independence of the state – is exposed to contingency (*PR*, 371).

While he goes on to state that the "spirit of the world" is free from all limits – that is, from the dialectic of the above *finite* individuals – and thus exercises a 'higher' right, Hegel also writes that the business of spirit – indeed its very definition – is to realize itself from within a dialectic of self-awareness. The aim of history is to attain a conception of itself in order to transform this knowledge to the real world.

For Marx the category of gradual transition is historically and logically flawed. Only a constitution whose principle, essence (unconscious law), is movement, is a constitution that answers to the demands of a moral philosophy and of social justice. Real (actualized) progress for Marx necessitates a real revolution. This is the thought that is intensified by Walter Benjamin in his discussion of violence, a discussion of much complexity, to whose challenge Jacques Derrida (among other scholars) has responded in his own writing on law.

**Benjamin's Divine Revolution**

The myth of Niobe, the queen of Thebes who contested the authority of the gods whose wrath was appeased through the killing of her fourteen children, embodies the sin of hubris, the pride that challenges the lawful and hierarchical configuration of the universe, the perturbation of the natural order of things. In the modern era, writes Walter Benjamin, the arbitrariness of the law and the state inherited that of the gods and of fate.[53] Law is the consequence of fate that represents the exclusive power of the gods, as the mythical violence represented in the past by

Greek gods. Modern law is the triumph of contingent violence derived from power that displaces all other, oppositional violence. *Critique of Violence* is one of Benjamin's first methodological essays, published in 1921, whose historical context is the repeated attempts to dismantle the inchoate democracy of the Weimar Republic by radicals from right and left. The state of emergency dictated to intellectuals the obligation to form a position in the historical intersection between democracy, bolshevism and fascism. Benjamin's insights attest to the strife of their moment.

Benjamin departs from a question that challenges the very distinction between violence that is historically acknowledged or "sanctioned,' and violence which is not; the general premise of sanctioned or 'legal' violence is its adjuration to an historical acknowledgement of its just – *legal* ends, in contrast to *natural* ends.[54] Benjamin's essential contention is that the state as a system of legal ends maintains monopoly over the use of violence: the state is threatened not by the violence that accompanies the pursuit of new ends but rather by the mere existence of any violence outside the law. The modern state strives therefore to preserve its decreed law against the institution of a new law, and to that end it divests (legal) subjects of all violence. The foundational distinction is between "law-preserving violence" and "law-making violence": "All violence is either lawmaking or law-preserving," and thus not only law but contract as such is at its origin implicated in violence.[55] Similarly to the relation between 'natural state' and 'legal state' a dialectical relationship marks the two types of violence: when a violent insurrection takes hold of a regime and establishes a new law, it in turn constitutes itself as law-preserving violence. In this work Benjamin rejects the redemptive purpose of parliamentary institutions which

Hegel, without promoting a uniquely parliamentary polity, deemed indispensable to the concept of the institutional structure of governance. Parliamentarians ignore the constitutive revolutionary force, says Benjamin, which conferred power on their representational position and legitimated the same violence.

Niobe's defiance incurred divine wrath not by being an offence toward the law but because it challenged law as such and threatened to bring on new law. The gods respond with furious retaliation, but they can most effectively impose or preserve their law when it is conceived as *fate* – the "uncertain, ambiguous sphere of fate" which binds violence as justifying means with violence as justified ends at the moment of lawmaking. For Benjamin the state was never constituted on enlightened accord and has no foundation in a form of social contract but is derived from mythical violence conditioned by fate. Indeed, constitutional law manifests the most nefarious instance of the *immediacy* of lawmaking violence: military violence is not merely a mediating force serving violent means to attain primordial 'natural' ends of defense and securing of territory, but rather a violence that imposes new conditions to be recognized as new law. Similarly, constitutional power, "in a demonically ambiguous way," institutes equal rights which can only be sustained through equally great violence.[56] The ancient reality of unwritten law proceeded to control trespassing and transgression through retribution; the modern state has the constitutional legal means to *punish* for the same deeds, exemplified by the principle that ignorance of the law is not a protection against punishment.

Clearly Benjamin does not think that law can be separate from violence. What he therefore seeks is a different kind of violence, but one that is as immediate and

boundless as mythical violence so as to have neutralizing capacity. What follows as a logical proposition is an odd analogical rationale between the mythical and the divine:

> Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythical violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine violence only expiates.[57]

Divine violence deals lethal strikes without spilling blood, it annihilates without forewarning, and it expiates the guilt instilled by law and its rule over "mere life." The divine attribute of violence is not limited to the domain of the religious, it is to be found in educative power as well and specifically in the sixth biblical commandment whose true ethical value transcends the sense of totalization and inspirits the interdiction with the openness and flexibility of a "guideline" for persons and communities wrestling with the exactions of survival.[58] A false ethics for Benjamin is the exaltation of existence itself, upheld by the "intelligent terrorist" as the "doctrine of the sanctity of life" and its supremacy over "just life." Life in its ethical essence is not the "mere" being alive, being in life, a category which man shares with animals and plants; life is the "irreducible, total condition that is 'man.'" According to Benjamin, then, life would be ontologically bound with freedom from law because this is the life from which all lawmaking is absent, and the consequence it bears is the negation of the concept of sacredness: the need to consecrate life is the gesture circumscribing it as the "bearer of guilt."

Violence outside the law is divine, pure, immediate, and revolutionary – "the

highest manifestation of unalloyed violence by man" – but it is not as readily recognizable as mythical, lawmaking violence is. The concluding words ascribe this difficulty to the obscurity of the expiatory effect and power of this violence, which "myth bastardizes with law," but its relative infirmity does not abate its autonomy as true "sovereign power." In a meticulous close reading of this text – which he calls "étrange," "singulier," and "déroutant" – Jacques Derrida finds the ultimate and most provoking paradox within this treatise of violence in the presentation of this critique by Benjamin as the only philosophy of history possible.[59] The idea of the development of violence, says Benjamin, alone can discriminate the mechanism of its fluctuations but also its historical purpose.

Derrida traces the opposition between mythical, lawmaking violence and divine, law-destroying violence to the site of God in Benjamin's thesis: mythical violence in its expression as law, as the juridical institution of the state, is phenomenalized in its "dialectical rising and falling in the lawmaking and law-preserving formations" and is therefore paralyzed in indecidability. It is an edifice of law as knowledge that cannot, however, be known stably and decisively, and is caught in a structural repression that continues to weaken it and finally brings on its self-destruction. Against it is divine violence, a true philosophy of history that would pursue mythical violence to its end and would deconstruct the reign of undecidable and pernicious authority of law. Divine violence is decisive, just, and revolutionary because it carries the "sign and seal" of (the Judaic) God, but its certitude is knowable only in its effects, its justice and expiatory power is hidden from men. "De toute façon, sous une forme ou sous une autre, l'indécidable est de chaque côté, et c'est la

condition violente de la connaissance ou de l'action. Mais connaissance et action sont toujours dissociées."[60]

For Derrida the sovereignty of God is its violent power of naming – the violence in the power of naming as such, which constitutes an infinite and absolute privilege of signature. Derrida examines this potentiality in the light of the relation between nonviolence and language in this essay: the only sphere of human agreement that is not accessible to violence is the sphere of language. The sign has here a mediating capacity, but in other of Benjamin's writings, recalls Derrida, the purely communicative and representative essence of language is cast in doubt – language is not merely a means to an end.[61] This critique of the mediating, 'bourgeois' function of the sign is thus also political and implicates language as determinant in the judgment of Good and Evil, rather than as mere instrument facilitating its knowledge. Derrida lingers over an intriguing analogy in the text:

> For it is never reason that decides on the justification of means and the justness of ends, but fate-imposed violence on the former and God on the latter.[62]

Just ends are never *universalizable*, says Benjamin, and nowhere is the particularity of the manifestation of violence exhibited more than in the suddenness of outbursts of anger in everyday experience. This "nonmediate function of violence" is for Derrida analogous to the authoritative function of God, conceived in the above quote in contradiction with the universality of law and of reason itself. Derrida seems to accept – through his formulation – this positioning of God as a reference to "la singularité irréductible de chaque situation […] une justice au-delà du droit [qui] vaut aussi bien

pour l'unicité de l'individu que pour le peuple et pour la langue, bref pour l'histoire."[63] The ethical thought of Benjamin, writes Derrida, is to be found in the courage to expose himself to the risks of the instability, irresolution, and mutability of justice – to the terror of ambiguity.

From an Hegelian point of view the perpetuation of violence – of law *as* violence – would be precisely the consequence of a negation that stops at itself and does not allow its own negation. The illegitimate violence by which law validates and preserves itself and whose predicates Benjamin theorizes so judiciously will remain – concealed – in power until another immediate and equally powerful violence will be posited in opposition. The very resort to the particular and its singular and situational justice that transcends a universal form of justice embodied in law points to an Hegelian logic of reversal: the violence of lawmaking can only be encountered with an equally powerful and immediate violence (of God); God's signature is in the violence of revolutionary destruction, of whose being mythical violence is the support. We return, then, to the dialectical logic of which Žižek speaks in his analysis of the uniqueness of the particular subject in relation to the universality of the Notion (of subject): the lawmaking violence of the mythical must exist in external reality as actuality, and it is within the coordinates of space and time that the Notion of divine violence acquires temporal existence and passes into pure singularity. This temporal form mediates between the atemporal Notion and external reality – the same mythical violence which serves as schema for the category of divine annihilation – but with the exemption from the guilt of law which the former is there to expiate.

From where is this guilt derived? The "guilt of mere life" which divine

violence expiates merits a few additional words. For Benjamin, man is irreducible to mere bloody, corporal life which he shares with animals and plants and of which blood is the symbol and thus devoid of sacredness. “What, then, distinguishes it from the life of animals and plants? And even if these were sacred, they could not be so by virtue of being alive, of being in life. It might be well worth while to track down the origin of the dogma of the sacredness of life.”[64] In the realm of law, life itself is “the marked bearer of guilt” seized by the mythical and “bloody” power of the law which desires its sacrifice for its own sake: it would seem that all that law can dominate is life in its *mereness*.

Benjamin’s treatment of the triple dialectic of mere life-guilt-law presents a complexity which deserves a more profound study then this chapter permits. I would like, however, to return to the significance of Benjamin’s deployment of mediation as a modality which explains several dissimilar processes within the dialectic of violence. Violence as such, whether mythical and legal violence, or divine law-breaking, draws its power from the immediacy of its action and the unmediated nature of its scheme: the very “uncertain, ambiguous sphere of fate” which visited devastating retribution on Niobe obfuscated necessarily the true nature of its action in the guise of fate, so as to dissimulate the real ends of lawmaking power.[65] Even while recognizing that “pure, unalloyed” revolutionary force participates in the critique as the same discursive mode, that is, as violence, Benjamin claims that in order to put a halt to the mythical violence of the state, a power equal in force must be disposed, one that only a theological mode can embody – or mobilize – but which must be equally immediate. Derrida, let us recall, points to the ambiguity in Benjamin’s

conception of the linguistic sign as means alone; intriguing in the essay is the moment in which divine violence is instantiated in such phenomena as "educative power": *Educative power* in "its perfected form" is a manifestation of power outside the law, but these, stresses Benjamin, are not defined by God's miracles but by the "expiating moment in them." That this moment is devoid of blood shedding says very little about its origin, delivery or countenance, but it is characterized, most importantly for Benjamin, by the "absence of all lawmaking," that is, it is pure, unalloyed violence that escapes the circularity of justice weighed by means and ends. Pure unmediated violence, then, would either be devoid of all symbolic (i.e. historicized) modalities of meaning, or hypostasize a new attribute instantiated by the sovereignty with which the essay ends. Not only are we faced with the question as to how biblical commandments can serve as *guidelines* without participating in a mediated signifying chain, but the unmediated status of 'educative power' – even the mode that stands entirely outside the law – does not receive the explication that would place it too outside the *symbolic*.

Moreover, the discussion of the value of 'mere life' in relation to 'the soul of the living' or the "not-yet-attained condition of the just man" is for Benjamin bound essentially with the question of the sacred. We have seen that the notion of sanctity based on life as mere existence is sternly rejected; indeed Benjamin refers to it rather as the "dogma of the sacredness of life" whose origin, he suggests, is well worth tracking down. To Benjamin, life's sanctity is a (paltry) secularized grafting of sainthood which Western tradition has had to relinquish along with the ancient sublimity in cosmology. But how can one track down an *origin* – or *sacredness* for

that matter – without mediation of the historical symbolic? And how can one understand the purpose of *guilt* as the originary sign that marks Niobe as the emblematic "bearer of guilt" who personifies – through the unique sparing of her life – the true purpose of lawmaking incarnated in mythical triumph? The gods granted life to Niobe and thus brought her pain to the heights of guilt: the lack of dissociation between life and guilt necessarily points to the junctures and affinities which constitute meaning as such.

In her insightful *Critique of Violence* Beatrice Hanssen situates Benjamin's 1921 essay not only within the political reality of the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution and the crisis of parliamentary democracy in the Weimar Republic, but also in the ideological positions of the French syndicalism movement represented in particular by Georges Sorel (and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon). Hanssen points out that Benjamin's critique consisted of the attempt to sever the traditional link (in philosophy) between just means and justified ends. His tenet articulated a notion of noninstrumental pure means which would be neither law-making nor law-preserving, nor would it be contaminated by positivistic law.[66] Benjamin's sympathy for the use of violence by proletariat insurrection explains, says Hanssen, his advocacy of revolutionary force in the form of strike earlier in the essay. Aware as he was of the potential for violence on both left- and right-wing alliances as recent European events were demonstrating, and opposed to Carl Schmitt's counterrevolutionary attack on liberalism, Benjamin nevertheless advocated a politics of "pure, unalloyed violence," pure means and (divine) ends. Indeed this constitutes an authoritative theology that foundered on the ambitious attempt to differentiate between just and unjust violence,

but, as Hanssen states, as a *critique* it was a recommendation "to discard all monolithic analyses of violence."[67]

Hanssen offers a comparative analysis of Arendt's political philosophy which ignores the structural in violence, particularly as it participates in strategic ideological mechanisms within politics. Arendt's theoretical articulation between violence – war or revolution – which "is a marginal phenomenon in the political realm," and politics, which is the materialization of the power of speech, concludes that not only is speech muted when confronted with violence but "violence itself is incapable of speech."[68] Any theory of violence constitutes a justification of violence and as such it "constitutes its political limitation."

In her rejection of the practice of violence by the students of the 1968 revolts, Arendt renounces the theoretical tradition upheld by modern (self-proclaimed) Marxist scholars (epitomized by Sartre and Fanon) that only violence can successfully interrupt the self-regulating chronological course of history. For Arendt, violence can at no time fulfill the function of the political as it is elaborated in her theory of communicative action: "It is the function, however, of all action, as distinguished from mere behavior, to interrupt what otherwise would have proceeded automatically and therefore predictably."[69] Inadvertently, to be sure, Arendt adopts the same term to denote violence as *mere*, that is, depoliticized behavior, as Benjamin did in his distinction between mere or existential life and just life which necessarily involves violence. For Arendt true political action as that which distinguishes humans from animals is the very limit of violence, whereas true justice for Benjamin will inaugurate a new age only through revolutionary unalloyed violence, manifested by

the sacrifice of mere life.

Interestingly, Arendt attributes to the students' revolts the same impulse that motivated Robespierre in his reign of terror: the pursuit of hypocrisy and the passion for unmasking its practices. Here and there the enemies were practicing a hypocritical form of state violence. In fact Arendt sees in French (but not only) historiography following the Revolution a perpetual need to unmask the monarchic leaders and purge the traitors: "It was the war upon hypocrisy that transformed Robespierre's dictatorship into the Reign of Terror."[70] However, she absolves Robespierre's violence because in the eighteenth century "terror was still enacted in good faith," whereas the purges committed during the Bolshevik Revolution sought the contrary: "to put the mask of the traitor on arbitrarily selected people in order to create the required impersonators in the bloody masquerade of a dialectical movement."[71] Thus for Arendt, as for Žižek and Lyotard, as we shall now see, Robespierre's terror may not have fallen outside the political since if terror became unconfined, it was only because "the hunt for hypocrites is boundless by nature." Žižek and Lyotard, however, not only assert the structural aspect inherent to violence but conceive of the (historically) divine moment of revolutionary violence from opposing angles.

**Robespierre the Divine Terrorist or Lyotard's Undivine Sans-culottes?**

Žižek argues that the notion of divine violence provides an insight into the role of violence in democracy, which he, contrary to Arendt, does not relinquish categorically. How does one remain loyal to the legacy of revolutionary ideals, and of

the "rational kernel" of Jacobin Terror, in our modern universe of opinion and economic exchange – this is his question in "Robespierre or the 'Divine Violence' of Terror."[72] Žižek rejects the determination of Jacobin revolutionary terror as the Benjaminian category of lawmaking violence which founded the bourgeois rule of law. Rather than conceptualize divine violence in obscurantist, messianic terms, he insists on positing it in historical empiricism which alone can condone the violence inherent in the spirit of a Robespierrian 'revolution with a revolution.' Žižek does not wish to abjure terror as such, rather to understand the actuality of Robespierre's terror in terms of "anti-humanist" or "inhuman terror."[73] Inhuman is precisely the dimension of (Lacanian) radical Otherness – pure subject stripped of "individuality," self-excluding from the realm of the living or from the Benjaminian "mere life."

The 'divine' should be conceived as "the heroic assumption of the solitude of sovereign decision. It is a decision (to kill […] or to risk one's life) made in absolute solitude, with no cover in the big Other."[74] Benjaminian *justice*, says Žižek, is the moment of collapse between justice and vengeance, the logic of which defines the outcome of the lives of what Žižek calls "the anonymous *part of no-part*." This social body is famously designated as the 'proletariat' but includes subjects who fall outside the domains represented by interest groups. But more importantly, argues Žižek, against the contained, naturalized liberal discourse of the political left – what he calls "post-political biopolitics, which is a politics of fear" – is needed a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the sense of a universalist pure form of 'part of no-part.' That is, the whole of society, including the liberal Left, rejects a true emancipatory politics based on universal principles, and is co-opted by a mobilizing theme of fear directed toward

a series of groups. These groups are excluded through the logic of marginalization from particular sets of the social body and as such they embody universality as form or in Hegel's term 'concrete universality': "here, the logic of representation of multiple particular interests and their mediation through compromises reaches its limit."[75]

This is why the French Revolution incarnates the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' which is precisely the intrusion of universalist-egalitarian principles into the field of statist politics, or in Benjamin's terms the change from mythic to divine violence. This is the Benjaminian moment of divine suspension of the complex net of the political field governed by the logic of (political) representation allowing the violent encroachment of the universal on the field. This dictatorship is democracy itself: "the struggle about the field of struggle itself."[76]

Although Žižek and Arendt share the fundamental conception of the political subject as possessing "the right to have rights" within a social community, Žižek radically parts company with Arendt when he defines politicization as "the violence of the democratic explosion itself," the moment of collapse of legitimate and illegitimate state power.[77] In Žižek's design, democracy is constituted of two moments: the regulated, (perceived) universal, process of electing representatives, and the moment of violent intrusions of those who demand that true universal equality be granted. Faced with the burden of containing or institutionalizing the violence of the "momentary utopian outburst," democracy is thus perpetually and structurally deploying violent means to protect itself against the (violent) excess enabled by its own logic: the logic of egalitarian and universal claim to right.[78] The

Hegelian logic of ethics in the negation of negation is once more at work: the antagonistic dissent against democracy must be contained within democracy's very notion.[79] The terroristic moment is thus inherent in democracy and its divine – and despotic – dimension is embodied by Robespierre's relentless effort to impose egalitarian justice on the collective, an effort sprung from sacred love of humanity, as he said in his last speech on the 8 Thermidor 1794: "sans lequel une grande révolution n'est qu'un crime éclatant qui détruit un autre crime."[80]

For Lyotard the moment of revolutionary paroxysm is to be read in isolation from the historical or political narrative of 'the course of history.'[81] In "Futilité en révolution" Lyotard advances the notion of 'libidinal history' which transcends the discourse of synthesis and opens the field of historical studies to the monstrosity inherent to history, whereas the "discours universitaire" of traditional historiography participates no less in the distortion and dissimulation of historical reality than did the Jacobin terror of interdictions and accusations. Lyotard sees in the coexistence beginning with the cults under the Roman Empire a paganism that attests to the *monstrosity* within the social body which had always been cleansed of its turbulent phase through a unifying scientific narrative. In revolutionary France, the emergence of paganism from the dechristianization movement was simultaneous to the transformation of the Republic into a monstrous body, a process disavowed by historians of the Revolution. The 'pagan historian,' however, is fascinated by the spectacle of disorganization that the sans-culottes forced upon the rigid Jacobin rituals in the autumn and winter of 1793:

> [Cette crise] n'est pas seulement une bataille politique et sociale dans le cadre

> établi des pouvoirs explicites, ou dans le champ encore sans parole des intérêts économiques, mais le fait que les violences s'y exercent de façon apparemment déplacée, divergente par rapport au domaine politique et qu'elles se présentent toujours sous la forme de parodies et de jeux scéniques, qu'elles donnent lieu à des festivités inquiétantes et qu'elles font tomber la séparation, essentielle au point de vue totalisateur, entre la réalité et la fiction.[82]

Sans-culottes paganism faces historical discourse at the encounter point of *puissance* and *pouvoir*; but the "disruption," "torrent," or "explosion" – terms used by delegates at the Convention as well as historians such as Daniel Guérin and Michelet to ascribe torrential violence either to the evil of the Jacobins or to the dechristianization movement – all belong to the discourse that rejects the pagan nature of the movement. For Lyotard, then, to think in a truly revolutionary fashion, neither Jacobinian nor Marxist, and most of all not nihilistic, is to reject the discourse of unity, whether republican or socialist.

Lyotard detects multiple movements of dechristianization rather than a single episode, and in this he remains committed to his notion that reality is constituted of singular events irreducible to a unique law of judgment. These dechristianization movements are manifested in erratic, disorderly and uncoordinated practices, and their instigators abscond without striving to institutionalize their desire. For this very reason, Lyotard concedes, these movements had no future as proper sovereignties, but they did destroy, much more than religion or church, the "religious function" inherent in the political and historical institution, and mostly they breached an opening in an

unconscious locus of time and space which fixes the event forever. One could say that the divine sovereignty which Lyotard seeks is more 'concrete' and historical than Benjamin's, and agree as well that the violent mobility established a power to invent without reference to a center. Lyotard sees the emergence of "intensités étranges" among the anti-clerical sans-culottes as propelled by a "balayage libidinal, non du calcul politico-économique," but of the imagination and the drive (*pulsions*).[83] These *pulsions* were exhibited in street parades, masquerades, and theatre; they exposed the parodic in the sign, through the true revolutionary gesture of laughter. Laughter, the essential element of pagan performances, does not culminate in cathartic purification but rather in an *immediate* intensification of libidinal forces that defy and sweep away the partition and compartmentalization of the political and the cultural, the regulated and the (libidinal) social.

The egalitarian 'dictatorship' of the sans-culottes performed a 'negation of the negation' – not only of the codified semiology of monarchy and clericalism but of the ritualized Robespierrian fête as well. Lyotard glosses his paradigm by stating that the sans-culottes were naturally catholic in the traditional political context, but it was their parodic exuberance that fractured the "totalité réconciliée" of scientific discourse. Pure violence, as we recall in Derrida's reading of Benjamin, bears the signature of

God – Benjamin's absolute metonymy for the name for justice. For Lyotard, pure defiance endures in the parodic, and in the anonymous death at the scaffold, devoid of martyrly recognition. This transgressive gesture nevertheless remains a "parodie de sacrifice" within the "certitude des divinités" that alone – and ephemerally – can

confront state terror.[84]

When Lyotard sets out to interpret the anti-clerical event staged by the sans-culottes he shares with the reader his considerations of the proper methodology and decides to cast off the option of recourse to genealogy and typology of signs. Reaching for a method that would attribute the choice of signs to an ancient iconography and genealogy of events would fail because it cannot explain these indices in the specific context of the crisis nor establish a coherent relation between the current event and the "calendrier trop vague des filiations des signes."[85] He proposes that such a methodology cannot determine the actualization of these signs since the latter are formed by libidinal drives which infiltrate the present and particular time and space and do not belong to political time.

A question remains. Let us bear in mind that Lyotard's notion of paganism represents the affirmation of irreducible differences in the order of reality and a negation of any attempt to render reality coherent through a unifying universal discourse. A pagan philosophy seeks to do justice to the plurality of singular events (and entities) and to delegitimize judgment grounded in universal narratives. If we create specific criteria to judge singular events we apply an imaginative will to confer a justice pure of pre-existing criteria and prejudices. But if Lyotard rejects the historical genealogy of indices of insurrections associated with ancient Greece and Rome and deems them imaginary fantasies of the Jungian type or products of political historicism, why does he take recourse to the signifier 'paganism'?

Indeed Lyotard relinquishes the notion of 'paganism' in the late 1970s, but it remains that even as he renounces the all-encompassing dominance of a discourse of

reason and causality, he resorts to a term that has been a mainstay of human meta-narrative. Here, as in Benjamin, the essential philosophical designators that should serve in the articulation of new understandings of ethics, politics, and justice, fulfill a critical function in resituating the ideal and the transcendental in a mandate no other than the master signifier of universal discourse – religiosity.

The eruption of violence and the suspension of a regulated edifice of state institutions can indeed designate the divine force that is outside the domain of lawmaking and law-preserving power, but this violent intensity is necessarily a temporary and not a perpetual mode of being, thus the question must be asked: when the moment of intrusion by the egalitarian adjuration of those outside the law, the "part of no-part," has passed, what form does divine violence – or paganism – assume? Žižek deviates from the Benjaminian vision when he recognizes that what presents itself here is the difficult task of institutionalizing the "momentary utopian outburst" because the idea of the "people" as sovereign power in democracy is a negative concept, one that has no substantial actuality except during the (mechanical) act of elections. The only way to understand the social organization of democracy is through its "terrorist" aspect, that is, the deformity, even mutilation of the political horizon, which demarcates the line between genuine democratic paroxysm and state-controlled totalitarian regime.

Lyotard conjures up the spontaneous festivities, street processions, parodies, and theatrical productions enacted by the sans-culottes to demonstrate their faith in the libidinal, unbounded, and innocent dimension of revolution and freedom. Hence the *immediacy* of an ethics of *pulsion* – the same non-mediated phenomenon of divine

violence whose annihilating power strikes from a non-instrumental source of sovereignty – and its exceptionality. But the exceptional event of the sans-culottes, if it exists, can be found in the precise relation defined by Hegel as 'concrete universality': the universal consists of a *series* of exceptions and is not simply grounded by its proper exception. One need not situate the sans-culottes in absolute exclusion as a warding off of a simplistic reduction to the logic of genealogy. In "Theses on the Philosophy of History" Benjamin says that "[H]istory is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now."[86] Benjamin points to Rome as the idea that charged Robespierre's revolutionary awareness; is the insurgence of the sans-culottes an exceptional revolutionary cut in the continuum of history? If the dialectic, instead of subsuming the particular into a totality, indicates a change of perspective – a "failed" thesis, as Žižek would have it – receiving its signification from the synthesis, is sans-culottes' "balayage libidinal" decisively situated outside the dialectical turn? Lyotard judiciously inscribes the inventive and violent mobility in a time and space entity that threatened the regulated political and religious social body; but how does the notion of 'paganism' constitute a cut into history that cannot be subsumed or articulated in the genealogical typology signified by the term?

Hegel adds a further word in concluding his preface to the *Philosophy of Right*; the paragraph, apart from containing the celebrated parable of philosophy as the painter of shades of grey offering but a blurry sketch of the owl of Minerva, reminds us that it is futile to think that philosophy should provide instructions "on how the world ought to be: philosophy, at any rate, comes too late to perform this

function." The rational is but this lesson offered by the concept whose task is to point to the empty place, the complete void, or even, says Hegel, "the *holy of holies*" which must be filled by appearances and reveries.[87] The real, or actual, must pass through the empty place and fill it to produce signification, and can be seen – rationally – as such, as symbolized in the divine, or the pagan, or nonviolent power. Hegelian ethics sees the rational as the understanding that contingency, delay, and misrecognition are constitutive of the actual dialectical turn, and even if it always comes too late, philosophy – precisely because it is not the guarantor of truth but a part of actuality – *persists*: "it is only when actuality has reached maturity that the ideal appears opposite the real and reconstructs this real world, which it has grasped in its substance, in the shape of an intellectual realm" (*PR*, 23).

**Notes to Chapter 1**

[1] G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 20. All page numbers and references to Hegel's work are taken from this edition and will henceforth be designated *PR* in the body of the chapter.
[2] Steven Smith, *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 11.
[3] Michael Roth, *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988); Gwendoline Jarczyk and Pierre-Jean Labarrière, *De Kojève à Hegel: Cent cinquante ans de pensée hégélienne en France* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1996).
[4] *Knowing and History*, p. x.
[5] Roth, like other Kojève scholars, reminds us of the strong influence his theoretical interpretations of desire had on Lacan, who attended sessions of his seminar "Introduction à la lecture de Hegel" at the Sorbonne in 1933-1939.
[6] *Knowing and History*, pp. 145-46.
[7] *Knowing and History*, p. 181.
[8] *Knowing and History*, p. 214. Roth points out that in his critique of power, Foucault advocates detaching the power of truth from forms of hegemony while abstaining from defining the specifics of new regimes. Foucault's intriguing support of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 has been studied in depth in Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*: *Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
[9] *De Kojève à Hegel*, pp. 217-18.
[10] Dudley Knowles, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right* (London: Routledge, 2002). Liberalism, accrding to Knowles, is a political philosophy whose premise is that freedom of all citizens of a society is a first principle and that freedom and equality as values override any power of the state in its relation to its citizens.
[11] *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right*, p. 83.
[12] Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 4.
[13] In his notes to the *Philosophy of Right* Wood (like other commentators) recalls Hegel's comments on his famous (or infamous) saying on the rationality of the actual, insisting, in the *Logic*, that it never means that everything that is, is as it ought to be: "such objects [trivial, external and transitory] and their 'ought' have [no] place within the interests of philosophical science" (*PR*, pp. 389-90).
[14] Susan Nieman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 2002), p. 92.
[15] *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 42-3.
[16] Richard J. Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2002). Both Nieman and Bernstein base their discussion of Hegel's position toward evil on his defiant departure from Kant. Against Kant who acknowledged the finite limitations of human knowledge of God's attributes and proposed a practical conception of God as a postulate of reason and of faith as what surpasses dogmatic improvisations, Hegel aimed at a rigorous actualization of Kant's premises while rejecting the latter's distinctions between the finite and the infinite, the 'is' and the 'ought', nature and reason.

[17] G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller George (New York: Allen and Unwin, 1969). All references to the text are designated as *SL* with paragraph numbers. http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/hl_index.htm

[18] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 310.

[19] Hegel's direct criticism is expressed in moral terms: "Those who attach such importance to the ought of morality and fancy that morality is destroyed if the ought is not recognized as ultimate truth, and those too who, reasoning from the level of the understanding, derive a perpetual satisfaction from being able to confront everything there is with an ought, that is, with a 'knowing better' — and for that very reason are just as loath to be robbed of the ought — do not see that as regards the finitude of their sphere the ought receives full recognition. But in the world of actuality itself, Reason and Law are not in such a bad way that they only *ought* to be — it is only the abstraction of the in-itself that stops at this-any more than the ought is in its own self perennial and, what is the same thing, that finitude is absolute. The philosophy of Kant and Fichte sets up the ought as the highest point of the resolution of the contradictions of Reason; but the truth is that the ought is only the standpoint which clings to finitude and thus to contradiction" (*SL*, § 268).

[20] *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, p. 447.

[21] *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation*, p.70.

[22] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 407. The paragraph continues thus: "The deed is not the imperishable element; spirit takes it back into itself; and the aspect of individuality present in it, whether in the form of an intention or of an existential negativity and limitation, is that which immediately passes away. The self which realizes, i.e. the form of the spirit's act, is merely a moment of the whole; and the same is true of the knowledge functioning through judgment, and establishing and maintaining the distinction between the individual and universal aspects of action."

[23] But spirit is necessarily affected by all immediate deeds and thoughts and is perpetually altered. See the *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Žižek provides a base for discussion of this statement in *Interrogating the Real* (New York: Continuum, 2005), pp. 32-34.

[24] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, 3 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984-5), vol. 3, p. 206.

[25] The reference is to the Rosicrucians, a religious society from the seventeenth century (*PR*, p. 391).

[26] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-4*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. John Forester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 242-43.

[27] In her discussion of the undecidability of Hegel's dialectic and the different levels on which negativity operates, Diana Coole considers the criticism mounted by post-Nietzschean critics like Althusser, Deleuze, Nancy, Derrida, Merleau-Ponty and Kristeva. The fundamental question concerns the distinction between negation as a category of reason as such and whose meaning is ontologically bound with identity, and "what Hegel's French critics call negativity or positivity." Is reason the generative force of the dialectic or is it what is attributed to self-reflexivity as movement – negativity as movement? In her circumspect study of the relationship between negativity and politics Coole insists on a politics that acknowledges the irreducibility of the negative in political action "with its inevitable moments of closure." See *Negativity and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2000), chapter 2.

[28] Mona Ozouf, "The Terror after the Terror: An Immediate History," in *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Vol. 4: *The Terror*, ed. Keith Michael Baker (New York: Elsvier Science Ltd., 1994), pp. 3-18.
[29] "The Terror after the Terror," p. 16.
[30] Hanna Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1990), p. 51.
[31] *On Revolution*, p. 57.
[32] *On Revolution*, p. 56.
[33] *On Revolution*, p. 60.
[34] Robert Stern, *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit* (New York: Routledge, 2002). For a brief discussion of the various critiques of Rousseau attributed to Hegel see pp. 157-62.
[35] Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, ed. Joseph O'Malley (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 137.
[36] *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, pp. 7-8. The reference is to Hegel's passage: "In so doing, it [the actual Idea or spirit] allocates the material of this its finite actuality, i.e. individuals as a *mass*, to these two spheres, and in such a way that, in each individual case, this allocation appears to be mediated by circumstances, by the individual's arbitrary will and personal choice of vocation" (*PR*, pp. 286-87).
[37] In the introduction the editor points out that in this theoretization Marx borrows this conceptual model from Feuerbach's theological critique in *Provisional Theses for the Reform of Philosophy*.
Feuerbach inverts the relation between God and man: thus man is the subject, finite and actual, and God his projection whose divine qualities are objectified (*Critique*, p. xxix).
[38] The translator and editor of the *Critique*, John O'Malley, points out throughout the Introduction that Marx's theories of universal suffrage and abolition of private property, leading to a democratized abolition of the state, derive from a methodical repudiation of some of Hegel's propositions in the *Philosophy of Right*.
[39] Hegel bases the institutional framework of socio-political unity on four principles: bureaucracy of civil servants; 'corporation' consisting of trade and professional organizations, modeled along the lines of the guild system; landed property within a system of inheritance, which thus preserves the property within landed noble families; Assembly of Estates – a legislative body comprised of representatives from civil and political bodies, serving to mediate between the particularities of the *homme* and the universality of the *citoyen*.
[40] *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, p. 55.
[41] *Philosophy of Right*, p. 336.
[42] *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, pp. 56-57.
[43] The notion of 'subjective freedom,' as distinct from 'capacity of freedom', 'formal freedom', 'negative freedom', and objective freedom' – some of the structures of freedom that manifest structures of will in the social world – is understood as a cognitive state, achieved by those able to recognize the ethical demands and potentialities offered by the social world through reflection, i.e., to recognize the rational in the actual. In Hegel's words moreover the concrete determination of subjective freedom is constituted as "the *right* of the subject to find its *satisfaction* in the action" (*PR*, p. 149).
[44] As Hegel's editor notes, in the *Republic*, Plato, in fact, does not specify how or whether each member of the ideal state is to choose the occupation to which he is best fitted; nor does he deprive the majority of citizens from possession of private property or family, two fundamental conditions for the perpetuation of subjective freedom in Hegel. (See *PR*, pp. 442-43.)
[45] Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating the Real* (New York: Continuum, 2005), p. 38.
[46] *Interrogating the Real*, p. 41.

[47] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of history*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 355.
[48] *Interrogating the Real*, p. 42.
[49] *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, p. 58.
[50] *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right*, p. 336.
[51] *Hegel's Ethical Thought*, p. 255.
[52] *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, p. 59.
[53] Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Reflections* (New York: Harvest/ HBJ, 1979), p. 294.
[54]When discussing the factors of strike Benjamin concedes that under some circumstances even the exercise of right may be called violent and he proceeds to situate it in his analysis of the objective contradiction in the legal situation, reflected in the violence subjects perpetrate upon their own legal ends in pursuit of what they deem as natural ends. *Ibid*, pp. 282-83.
[55] "Critique of Violence," pp. 287-88.
[56] "Critique of Violence," pp. 295-96.
[57] "Critique of Violence," p. 297.
[58] This proposition could be better supported if the commandment were rendered in its literal translation from the Hebrew "Thou shalt not murder" and not, as is widely accustomed, "Thou shalt not kill."
[59] Jacques Derrida, "Prénom de Benjamin," *Force de loi* (Paris: Galilée, 1994).
[60] "Prénom de Benjamin," p. 131.
[61] "The Task of the Translator" (1923) and "On Language in General and on Human Language" (1916).
[62] "Critique of Violence," p. 294.
[63] "Prénom de Benjamin," p. 121.
[64] "Critique of Violence," p. 299.
[65] Benjamin recognizes that there is a case where violence can be asserted as mediated – military violence, which is sanctioned by legal subjects as a "natural," "predatory" violence used directly towards its natural ends. But even military violence must end in a ceremony sanctioning peace as the advent of new law. A revolutionary general proletarian strike follows the same scheme and can exert violence which is of the kind most feared by the state for its lawmaking character.
[66] Beatrice Hanssen, *Critique of Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 21.
[67] *Critique of Violence*, p. 29.
[68] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin, 1990), p. 19.
[69] *On Violence*, p. 31.
[70] *On Revolution*, p. 99.
[71] *On Revolution*, p. 100.
[72] Slavoj Žižek, "Robespierre or the 'Divine Violence' of Terror," in http://www.lacan.com/zizrobes.htm 2007.
[73] "Robespierre," p. 5.
[74] "Robespierre," pp. 3-4.
[75] "Robespierre," p. 16.
[76] "Robespierre," p. 16.
[77] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951), p. 290.
[78] "Robespierre," p. 18.
[79] Žižek goes so far as to argue that a true opposition to the normative technocratic de-politicized middle class today is the mobilized Rightist populism exemplified in France by Le Pen's National Front.

[80] Maximilien Robespierre, “Dernier discours prononcé devant la Convention le 8 Thermidor an II, ” http://membres.lycos.fr/discours/8thermidor.htm
[81] Jean-François Lyotard, *Rudiments païens* (Paris: Union général d’éditions, 1977), p. 162.
[82] *Rudiments païens*, pp. 168-69.
[83] *Rudiments païens*, p. 180.
[84] *Rudiments païens*, p. 197.
[85] *Rudiments païens*, p.179.
[86] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968), p. 261.
[87] *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 89.

## Chapter 2

## Jean Genet's Final Revolution: The Palestinians or an Ethics of the Blind Spot

In 1971 Jean Genet wrote an article entitled "Les Palestiniens," commenting on a series of ten photographs taken in Palestinian camps and published in the review *Zoom*. "Les images," he writes, "on le sait, ont une double fonction: montrer et dissimuler. Celles-ci s'ouvrent sur un tireur et son fusil, mais pourquoi? Ensuite, pourquoi tant d'armes? Pourquoi tant de photographies qui montrent une Palestine en armes et décharnée?"[1] A seemingly unrelated but curious answer to his own question can be heard in an interview with Rüdiger Wischenbart for Austrian radio in December 1983 about the essay "Quatre heures à Chatila," which documents the massacre that occurred in the Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila in September 1982.[2] To the question as to how a reader can distinguish between Genet the writer as novelist and poet, and Genet the witness and reporter, he answered by recounting an anecdote:

> Allors, je n'ai qu'une chose à vous dire. C'est que Degas, le dessinateur, avait fait un sonnet. Il le montre à Mallarmé et Mallarmé le trouve mauvais. Et Degas dit à Mallarmé: "Et pourtant j'avais mis beaucoup d'idées." Et Mallarmé lui répond: "On ne fait pas un poème avec des idées mais avec des mots." L'espèce de petit récit que j'ai fait, je ne l'ai pas fait avec des idées à moi. Je l'ai fait avec des mots qui sont les miens. Mais pour parler d'une réalité qui n'était pas la mienne.[3]
>
> Céline said the same thing: words cannot be an *engagement* – language is self-

sufficient and does not contain any kind of political claim. What is of interest in Genet is how the generative force of 'terror' within his visual, experiential, and conceptual ethics has mobilized a body of critical theorization distinguishing his writing as the pinnacle of artistic subversion, writing that expresses the duplicity inherent to dominant (Western) culture.

More crucial, in my reading, is the way the very framework which is deemed (by Genet's commentators) as concerned principally if not uniquely with targeting the ideological interests of the West as written into its aesthetic as well as political discourse produces in fact imposing dimensions of critical perspectives that have been less traditionally reviewed. The scholarship on Genet focuses on his critique of the displacement and oppression of minorities and its resonance with the representation in language and art of the process and consequences of this persistent ostracism. This very frame of reference comes forth, in Genet's Palestinian texts, as a layered and oblique montage textualizing an ethics concerned with articulating the relation between the aesthetic and the political act as such rather than merely assailing the deviancies of their representation in Western discourse.

The analysis proposed in this chapter moves beyond framing Genet's ethics as a writing that pits power and might against abjection and deprivation. Rather, my reading suggests that Genet's writing draws, from the heart – both geographical and ideological – of the dispossessed, a picture of revolution that is more an engraving than an account: its gaze foregrounds the shadows of violence and the preeminence of the question of subjectivity in all ethical statements.

The persistent reference to the trope of terror as a moment of rupture raises

the following questions: where is the line between transgressive engagement and entrapment in fascination for violence that is seen in Genet's literature? Inextricably tied to the reading of literature, and specifically to its ethical commenting, what constitutes an ethically critical reading of literary texts that have been canonized as 'subversive?' And how can art 'resist theory,' that is, be a site of transformation against its own readings?

**The Icon of the Crisis of Representation**

The importance of Genet's remark during Wischenbart' interview looms large against his commentary on the Palestinian images and his own montage; but its significance lies not in the inaccuracy of the injustice, or suffering and death in the refugee camps. Rather, the context and history of the Palestinian struggle and its very real images seem to be presented in a narrative whose gaze produces the aestheticization of an alterity, and which perpetuates a tradition of, if not a Western Orientalism then a logic of articulation based on historical appropriation. In 1971, commenting in "Les Palestiniens" on a photograph of a body wrapped in shroud, surrounded by armed Fedayeen, Genet writes: "Aucune brutalité chez les feddayin. […] Il y règne […] une légère courtoisie que je n'ai perçue nulle part […]. Au Moyen-Orient un homme nouveau va peut-être naître, et le feddaï, par certains côtés, en serait pour moi la préfiguration et l'esquisse."[4] In his reflections on a conversation from 1972 in Paris with seven young Palestinian exiles, a text similarly entitled "Les Palestiniens," Genet recalls the Fedayeen's words as direct, candid, and uninhibited: "Je ne me souviens d'aucun sujet tabou. Ils étaient d'une totale franchise, que ce soit

pour critiquer l'autorité, ou la religion en tant qu'autorité morale […]. Je ne connais pas l'arabe, mais il me semble que l'arabe parlé par les feddayin est plus sobre que celui parlé partout ailleurs – avec moins d'ornements."[5] Not only does the individual Palestinian revolutionary exhibit a purity of spirit which embodies the very negation of what is conceived of as 'military', but their language itself is ontologized as 'sober', simple, perhaps more transparent than other languages, not requiring being understood. "Ils étaient très beaux. Il y a – il y avait – une espèce de *chic* feddai. On pourrait dire que leur éthique était indissociable de leur esthétique."[6] The ethical dialectic operates inversely here: while the inaccessible language represents simplicity and impartiality, the exposed aesthetic is reified as essentially opulent.

This is the writing that impelled Edward Said, in a 1990 commentary "On Jean Genet's late works," to ask himself whether Genet's love of the Palestinians amounts to a "kind of overturned or exploded Orientalism." While Said asks whether Genet's attachment may be a "sort of reformulated colonialist love of handsomely dark young men," he is not, finally, inclined to inculpate Genet with recourse to the codified categories dominating Western knowledge and experience of the Arab/Islam world.[7]

Said discusses the political subversiveness of Genet as a literary icon and qualifies his writing as bearing an "impersonal philosophical dignity." But Genet's text bears "philosophical dignity" precisely because it refutes its author's impersonal position in relation both to his subject(s) and to his own positions as chronicler: objective, detached, sober or engaged. Indeed Genet's text bears witness to the very question of witnessing which literally torments him throughout *Un captif amoureux*, namely,

'why am I writing this book?'

Genet's essays on the Palestinians and on the Sabra and Chatila camps have been subjected to numerous analyses, many of which draw on questions of semiotics in Genet's poetics, and on the fierce textual battles he fought against absences and blanks of representation framed by European dominant discourse.[8] One such critique is offered by Laura Oswald who stresses Genet's dismantling of the classical mimetic apparatus whereby a mirror is held before reader and spectator, establishing a univocal and identificatory relation to narrative and dramatic discourse. Thus, writing commits acts of violence on historical reality by silencing and concealing the division between self and its objectification within the multiplicity of voices in any given historical moment. Oswald points to Genet's claim that when Western media

> consolidate Palestinian identity with the Arab world at large, then identify the Arab world with the exotic sensuous netherland of *The Arabian Nights*, it both destroys Palestinian integrity within the Middle East and maintains an image of Arabs as interesting but ignorant savages incapable of governing themselves. Genet underscores the violence of dominant discourse and directs attention to the way the abuses of the Aristotelian tradition shapes the representation of marginal cultures in the West.[9]

No critic would discount Oswald's argument that Genet wrangles with the threat posed by representation in its absorption of ideological differences and political resistance into a totalizing signification of subjectivity. I too am in agreement with her assertion that "Genet describes the Palestinian resistance movement as a spectacle in search of a representation, a performance in search of a text." To that end, he

records the creation of an image of a marginal and allegedly rootless culture through photojournalism and video which serves only to reflect the "fears and desires of dominant culture and ideology."[10]

Genet's work can be understood as pointing to the crisis of representation at the core of the Western intellectual writing enterprise, and to an ethics of writing predicated on what Oswald articulates as a "fragmented and stilted" invocation of interviews. In her analysis Genet's writing conjures up memories and historical background, leading us "*through* the problem posed by the question, 'where do you stand on the Palestinian question?,' not *toward* a solution."[11]Oswald argues that in his plays and novels Genet introduces the figure of the double in order to disclose the indissociable tie between history and its means of representation and to emphasize the multiplicity of discourses and identities. Genet thus "does poetic justice to the metaphysical foundations of Western culture and the monolithic order of Man."[12] However, the argument that "Genet […] stages the political revolution on the site of representation" does not offer a sufficiently articulate understanding of the intelligible ethical perspective on revolution that Genet extends through his writing. I wish to focus here on some subtleties in his writing – and his writing on the subtle – that seem to reveal a movement whose poetics advance beyond the intent to expose the difficulty of taking a stand at all or to rescue and preserve a national or cultural specificity of the Palestinian people as Oswald argues.

In fact, the very words Oswald chooses to quote from "Quatre heures à Chatila" to substantiate what she sees as Genet's grasp of Palestinian difference exemplify the profoundly enigmatic 'stand' of Genet's textual politics:

> Le choix que l'on fait d'une communauté privilégiée, en dehors de la naissance alors que l'appartenance à ce peuple est native, ce choix s'opère par la grâce d'une adhésion non raisonnée, non que la justice n'y ait sa part, mais cette justice et toute la défense de cette communauté se font en vertu d'un attrait sentimental, peut-être même sensible, sensuel; je suis français, mais entièrement, sans jugement, je défends les Palestiniens. Ils ont le droit pour eux puisque je les aime. Mais les aimerais-je si l'injustice n'en faisait pas un peuple vagabond?[13]

What must be underscored here are the exceptionally honest words with which Genet concedes that taking a (political) position is contingent on factors that are grounded neither in a reasoned politico/juridical set of guidelines, nor in professed principles of moral justice. These are words that point to breaches in Genet's own inscription of political activism; here we read not only that adherence to a cause is likely to be grounded in attraction, whether sentimental, sensual or imaginary, but that a cause is an object of love. But this is not unrequited love; this love is redeemed as long as its object is suspended in a state of exception, a vagabondage deprived of civil rights; perhaps self-deprived. Genet knows and admits this. His words do not volunteer a "vision of a new world order [and a warning] that the world will remain in endless crisis" as long as the old order remains blind hostage to the crisis of representation and the diversity of the modern political arena.[14]

To read Genet's epic swan song is to confront the imminence of death. The images of death in his late works *Les Paravents* and *Un captif amoureux* cannot but resonate with the reader's knowledge both of Genet's death soon after the completion

of *Captif* and of the predicted death of many of the Palestinians whose story and chronicle had become so familiar to the reader through this memoir. Said sees the saturation of death images culminating towards the end of both works in the figure of the unrecognizably aged mother and her distanced, self-exiled son representing the fedayee Hamza and his mother at whose house Genet spent one night at the end of his sojourn with the Palestinians. In fact, Genet writes that *Captif* may have been the aesthetic abstraction of his quest to recapture those hours spent with the mother/son pair. But the very pervasiveness of death is staved off, says Said, by the almost mystical "deflagration" of Genet's work itself, which abruptly shifts mood and tone: its narrative genre serves as the stakes in which identities (and the stakes itself) are burned. Genet's work is unincorporating, impermeable even to death; thus it is an Absolute which is manifested neither in human identity nor in a personified deity. This Absolute is an "irreducibly religious conviction," claims Said, a force which "will not settle down, nor be incorporated or domesticated, but which needs to be represented and cared for by a people absorbed in it and at the same time, must risk its own disclosure or personification."[15] But if this "final and most intransigent paradox" serves to defy the appropriation or identification with the work's own narrativizing, if Genet asks the reader to perform a Hegelian negation of the negation, it is not to a point of self-annihilation that *Un captif amoureux* brings the reader. Repeatedly and grippingly the work brings the reader to confront the question 'why am I writing this book?'

Reading Genet involves one more demanding encounter, his insistence on betrayal as the drive for any experience or engagement. Said alludes to the

complexity of the scope of interpretation of "Genet's addiction to betrayal" and delineates its trajectory through his biography as well as his stated position. This trajectory begins in the callous collaboration of *Journal du voleur* (where assuming a permanent will to betray is preferred to a permanent identity as a rehabilitable criminal) and continues through the betrayal constituting the culprit object of analysis as language, both for Genet himself and for his critics. In his interview with Wischenbart, Genet attests to his view of the utter untrustworthiness of language:

> Je ne suis vrai qu'avec moi-même. Dès que je parle, je suis trahi par la situation. Je suis trahi par celui qui m'écoute, tout simplement à cause de la communication. Je suis trahi par le choix de mes mots […]. Et c'est dans la solitude que j'accepte d'être avec les Palestiniens […]. C'est quand je suis seul et que je décide solitairement. Et là je crois que je ne mens pas.[16]

The "intransigent paradox" of honesty and distrust in a work that is consecrated to the story of one people even as it upholds betrayal as the highest value has precipitated a reading that considers the metaphysical implications of Genet's epic.

**Genet and the Metaphysics of Good and Evil**

A remarkably detailed study of the origins of Genet's proclamations and action is found in an essay written by Eric Marty in January 2003 during the second Intifada. Marty locates Genet's relation to the Palestinians in an originary role he accords to the Jews, a role which situates the Jews in the very relation of the Western metaphysical battle of Good and Evil found at the core of language itself.

Marty begins his analysis by reflecting on Sartre's treatment of Genet's anti-Semitism. Sartre rejects the accusation that Genet was motivated by his discrimination against or his aspiration to exterminate the Jews, arguing that such objectives are foreign to any of Genet's political investments. Rather, Sartre reads Genet's statement "je ne pourrais pas coucher avec un Juif" as tied inextricably to his repugnance towards a lover who cannot also be his executioner. Marty finds in Sartre's argument the understanding of Genet's anti-Semitism as "an ontological fatality," that is, tied to the impossibility of a question of life and death, and to the Jew as representation of the Good.[17] Marty's reading traces Genet's moral aesthetics precisely to the question of origin with reference to Kierkegaard's theological interpretation of Abraham's sacrificial act as well as to Sartre's Kierkegaardian reading. Good and Evil in Genet are represented by the originary figures of Cain and Abraham. The Biblical Cain is incapable of thinking sacrifice other than in the form of murder, violence, nothingness, and treason; he is tormented by anxiety of the Good. In contrast, Abraham, by redeeming humanity from human sacrifice and from sacrificial debt, reflects a consciousness of anxiety as humanity's very being. Abraham's attitude is nothing other than absolute confidence in the Promise – the promise of paternity and descendency that was made to him; his confidence, therefore, is in language.

Marty's thesis is that Genet's imaginary touches the universe of the Jew through a metaphysical conflict borne to the field of history (that is, the interiorization of the historical situation in which the metaphysical thought is born, which he calls, after Heidegger, the historial). The conflict is enforced through the particular

historical mediation of the Evil of Nazism, and through this negative mediation the Jew came to be identified with the Good. Only through such a mediation can Genet's 'commitment' or 'engagement' with the Palestinian cause be understood, because for him the political is not a real category. Moreover, and crucially, the project of *Captif* – from the accusations of neglect and mistrust by Arab countries toward the Palestinians, to the description of the fierce Cossack-like character of the Circassians-turned-King-Hussein's henchmen, and to the deviousness and eventual corruption of the faction-ridden PLO – is scandalous precisely because it works against the concept of *Arabité*.[18]

Far from being solely aesthetic or imaginary, Genet's baroque writing speaks of the real and elucidates the event as such while distinguishing it from mere documentation. More than a reportage, the text "Quatre heures à Chatila" is a testimony of the massacre, but one which for Marty is extremely compromised by the relation to the ontological definition of the Good: "On définira la position de témoin comme celui qui par sa parole aspire au Bien, et l'on dira par conséquent que, dans la position complexe où se trouve Genet à Chatila, l'acte même de témoigner semble suspendre en lui ce qui à nos yeux lui définit ontologiquement, l'angoisse du Bien."[19]

According to Marty, Genet's textual testimony in "Quatre heures à Chatila" hinges on three dispositions to which Marty refers as 'intentions". First is the consideration of representation: Genet's witnessing of the horror of death is inscribed within an awareness of the self-compromised nature of the modern witness whose gaze is caught between the self-conscious interdiction of idealizing and aestheticizing the dead, and the inability to reduce the witnessing to a neutral and 'objective' act.

Moreover, if the witness, Genet, for instance, transgresses neutrality, "c'est parce qu'il n'est pas là par hasard."[20]

Second is what Marty calls "la pensée tragique," a metaphysical dialectic inextricably binding salvation to the persistence of Evil. The necessary condition of radical Evil is embodied in Genet's words quoted above: "Ils [les Palestiniens] ont le droit pour eux puisque je les aime. Mais les aimerais-je si l'injustice n'en faisait pas un peuple vagabond?" Marty traces the discursive circularity that operates in this statement: the superposition of the subjective level ("puisque je les aime") and the objectif ("les aimerais-je si l'injustice n'en faisait pas un peuple vagabond?") which invokes again the subjective level. This circularity reinstates the negative metaphysics because "l'injustice" becomes a necessary element of the eternal vagabondage of the Palestinian people.[21]

The third intention contends with the relation between testimony and the question of the Good. This position, argues Marty, is incongruous with the previous two in that it responds to the inability inherent to the two positions to integrate the historical and political reality of the carnage and of death. In other words, while the text of the gaze-as-chronicler and the gaze-as-tragic rejects the position of the neutral, objective reporter, reality places Genet as the "témoin-en-tant-qu'il-ne-sait-pas […]. Car c'est par ce non-savoir qu'il peut prétendre à l'innocence."[22] The reference is to the rhetorical questions Genet raises towards Israeli involvement in the massacre – the only speaker is truth itself – truth as the consequence and proof of seeing an aftermath.

This reintegration of the Good – that which is ontologically foreign to Genet –

undergoes a revealing transformation in *Un captif amoureux*. A political irony is present here toward the qualms of the Palestinians and a lucidity toward the increasingly complex circumstances of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is here that Marty locates the paradox of the Genetian discourse: knowing all too well that even the sharpest lucidity does not find its source in objective witnessing, Genet constitutes the Palestinians as a pure subject of politics and revolution, and from that moment on he can turn his gaze to what is outside their historical and political reality, toward their (demonically) sanctified status, namely, "conserver ce qui les fait dissemblables, uniques, parmi les autres peoples arabes."[23] Theirs is the relation to the origin of the Good, represented in Western culture by the Jews and by their irreducible link to an inevitability of language as trustworthy, as incarnating a promise.

**The Ethics of a Promised Land**

In his interview with Wischenbart, Genet famously grants that "le jour où les Palestiniens seront institutionnalisés, je ne serai plus de leur côté."[24] For Genet the Palestinian fight is an infinite contestation of any terrestrial possession, and that is what constitutes the deep ambivalence and paradoxically de-historicized position from which Genet views their revolution. Indeed, *Un captif amoureux* is a textual court where Genet makes his unrelenting case against the ontological validity of the Palestinian claim to a homeland as a formally recognized territory:

> De plus haut que moi-même quand je la contemplais, le révolution palestinienne ne fut jamais désir de territoires, presque terrains perdus, jardins

> potagers ou vergers sans clôture, mais un grand mouvement de révolte d'une contestation cadastrale jusqu'aux limites du monde islamique, non seulement limites territoriales mais révision et probablement négation d'une théologie aussi endormeuse qu'un berceau breton.[25]

This contemplation is made from the 'height' of the year 1985, but if we were to protest to Genet his lack of vision and his idealization of the Palestinian fedayee as the representative of the 'End of History,' and bring before him the reality of the radicalization of Islam today among Palestinians, his text has already ensured that we be forewarned: "Plus que tout je redoutais les réflexions logiques, par exemple l'invisible métamrphose des fedayeen en chi'ites ou en Frères musulmans […] tout homme naissant et grandissant avec ses débats, ses troubles intérieurs et cachés, il n'eut pas été impossible qu'un Frère musulman investît secrètement un feddai"(363).

Doubts of this nature did not figure in his 1983 radio interview with Wischenbart: "[j]'ai vu un peuple dont chaque membre accomplissait des gestes d'une pesanteur, d'un poids réel […] ce que j'éprouve maintenant et ce que j'éprouvais presque le jour même, c'est que ce peuple était le premier dans le monde arabe qui ait un rapport avec soi-même, un rapport moderne. Et sa révolte était moderne."[26] The important question remains, constituting the core of what Marty mistrusts in Genet: the articulation of the modern and of revolt. In the same interview, Genet reiterates the utter dissociation from the Palestinian cause he will assume when Palestine will have its territory. He is lured by a people so serene for having stepped out of the oblivion and disregard in which they have been left from 1948 to 1965 – without the PLO or Fatah, unarmed and undisturbing the tranquility of the West,

absent from Western press. This period of neglect and marginalization, even abjection, turned them into a "peuple sage." It is clear that Genet expresses a conviction that defines a metaphysical idea of "the Good," elaborated by Marty:

> Je pense que c'est dans le fait même de se révolter qu'il y a affirmation d'une existence […]. Je pense que […] c'est ça qui est le plus important pour eux […]. Dans leurs actes, même s'ils ont un objectif final qui est la libération de leur territoire national, mais le plus important, c'est que sur ce chemin ils continuent à avoir la liberté d'exister dans leurs actes justement. Mais aucun Palestinien n'a un passeport palestinien. Ça n'existe pas.[27]

It is not my intention here to look to contemporary realities in the Palestine of today – elected government, passports, and banks – in order to dismiss Genet's alleged blindness. Nor is my intention to analyze the phenomenology of Genet's anti-Semitism. It would be the subject of another project to study the notion of betrayal – and of the modern – in relation to the current practices of the Palestinian Autonomy. One could also relate the discourse of revolt as an existential aim in Genet's conception of the Jews – before and after the establishment of their state – in order to scrutinize further the question of adherence to a cause. But even Marty's exceedingly detailed reading of this relationship overlooks Genet's acknowledgement of the ambivalent feelings he has towards the sovereignty of the Jews in Israel. Marty cites these words from *Captif amoureaux* where Genet spells out the question he had hitherto been reluctant to pose to himself:

> [S]i elle ne se fût battue contre le peuple qui me paraissait le plus ténébreux, celui dont l'origine se voulait à l'Origine, qui proclamait avoir été et vouloir

> demeurer l'Origine, le peuple qui se désignait Nuit des Temps, la révolution palestinienne m'eût-elle, avec tant de force, attiré? (239)[28]

The words not quoted by Marty, continue thus:

> En me posant cette question je crois donner la réponse. Qu'elle se découpât sur un fond de Nuit des Commencements – et cela, éternellement – la révolution palestinienne cessait d'être un combat habituel pour une terre volée, elle était une lutte métaphysique. Imposant au monde entier sa morale et ses mythes, Israël se confondait avec le Pouvoir. Il était le Pouvoir.

At the same time that Genet grants that the cause to which he adheres is de-historicized, driven by desire that does not seek attain its object – an autonomous sovereign state for the Palestinians – he also undermines the conflation of discourses: the mythical, moral discourse of origins – of Israel – is severed from its transformation into the pure phenomenology of power.

**The Question of the Rights of Man**

Further consideration of two points enhances the understanding of the meaning of 'taking a position.' The first concerns Genet's account of terror and how he relates terror and terrorism. In a recent essay "How to Live with Catastrophes?" Slavoj Žižek intensifies the discussion of modernity's ethical proclamation defined by the reaction to catastrophes, in a critique which seems to reinstate the Genetian discourse in the present moment. Žižek draws both from Adorno and Horkheimer's study of the Enlightenment, and from Heidegger's definition of catastrophe, namely that "the essence of catastrophe has nothing to do with ontic [contingent, "pathological" nonessential characteristics] differences, since the essence of

catastrophe is the catastrophe of essence itself, its withdrawal, its forgetting by man."[29] Rather, the ultimate catastrophe is "the normal run of the administered world in the absence of any ontic catastrophe." Since a teleological solution of identification through a coincidence between victim (for instance of the holocaust) and subject (for instance first-world consumer) fails, an ethical stance would involve a certain *fiction*, a certain disavowal of the fact that the commission of an ethical act depends on an utterly contingent condition or outcome: "If I'm lucky, my present act will *at some point have been* ethical!"[30]

The ethical lesson that the twentieth century teaches us inheres in the graceful acceptance – no irony intended here – of having the luck to act ethically either before a catastrophe or in the prospect of catastrophe. In other words we must project ourselves into a catastrophe perceived as final in order to act against it in the present. What September 11 elicited in the United States was rather the preventive strike against potential enemies, where the "war on terror" is an endlessly suspended anticipation of the next grand catastrophe.

Žižek points to the Palestinian reality as the model for Third World catastrophes – a tedious and lackluster existence where emergency is routine. Genet, for his part, demonstrates the logic of preventing an ethical appropriation of catastrophe (on the part of Israel) through linguistic annexation of the words holocaust and genocide: even if the word "terreur" has existed in the French vocabulary since "la blanche" – the white, royalist terror of 1795 – it has not been a terrifying word until now. Today's Shiites have enabled the personification of the word "terrorist." Thus the invasion of Lebanon and the months of bombing Beirut

were not acknowledged by Israel (and the Western world) as acts of intrusion or state terrorism: "Faire la chasse à Israël n'indique pas qu'on soit adversaire ni ennemi, mais terroriste, le mot disant alors que le terrorisme distribue indifférement la mort et qu'il doit être détruit où que l'on le trouve […]. En tuant un chi'ite et un Palestinien Israël prétendit avoir nettoyé l'univers des deux terrorismes" (532-33).[31] Genet thus confronts the Origin – Israel – on its own terrain, the terrain, or land, of language – of the Good.

Without taking on the problematic ascription to Israeli discourse of "annexation" of the holocaust and its characterization as an act of verbal aggression by Jews or Israel, let us maintain that the invasion of Lebanon was – in the least – highly controversial and divisive within Israel itself. A twofold prophecy is initiated by the PLO official Abu Omar, who in 1972 attributes the thrust of the nascent revolution to the United States' exploits and failures in Vietnam. But unlike the powerful regimes "[n]ous ne pouvons pas appliquer leurs ruses. Bombarder New York, nous ne pouvons pas." In a footnote Genet adds that "Abu Omar semble avoir vu flamber Beyrouth en 1982 seul, sans le secours d'un pays, arabe ou non"(471).

But if, as Žižek says, the "transcendental" turn of the true catastrophe is the one that "*already is* this life under the shadow of permanent threat of catastrophe," the vision of eternal suspension in revolution in the cyclical sense becomes more unsettling.[32] What is the rejection that is averred in the discourse of the Sudanese Lieutenant Moubarak?

> – Être un mouvement de révolte, de révolte totale d'une toute petite province, c'est mieux que cultiver un jardinet. – Pourquoi? – D'abord parce qu'un

> mouvement de révolte est éternel et qu'il faut espérer dans l'éternel retour. Être pris dans le mouvement palestinien c'est appartenir au Satan immortel qui de toute éternité a fait et fera la guerre à Dieu. S'il est lié au temps, puisqu'il est mouvement, le mouvement palestinien ne doit pas se fixer la conquête d'un ridicule espace (483).

Moubarak is a Sudanese revolutionary, forced to learn Arabic despite his non-Arab ethnicity ("moi nègre"), but who holds an animistic view of the sacred. He also reveres the Jewish philosopher Spinoza, whose "patronage" sustains Moubarak's patchwork or factitious conception of the revolutionary choice: "Que je suis un nègre amoureux de la pacotille […] ce qui emmerde le monde et surtout le monde arabe, c'est que le rêve des Palestiniens est aussi fort que leur existence" (484). 'Pacotille' also means bogus, cheap; it designated the brilliant but worthless jewelry used as reimbursement in slave trade transactions. His conversation with Genet affirms the rootless condition of the revolutionary cause – ethnic, religious, racial, temporal, or spatial, even as it emphasizes his esteem of a philosopher whose revolution consisted of rejecting the notion of group mobilization for a cause.

The second point guides us back to Marty's reading of Genet's need to constitute a positive political community of Palestinians modeled on an ideal of vagabondage, incarnated by the young fedayeen – the "sacrificed." Conforming neither to a leftist or third-world recuperation of Genet's discourse, nor to a demand for autonomous institutional structures, the Palestinians must submit to an irreversible injustice, a submission which necessarily proves itself as an eternal truth. In a recent article, Jacques Rancière wrote of the shift in the West from the theme of the Rights

of Man to the rights of the rightless, of the populations hunted out from their homes and land and threatened by ethnic slaughter. These rights appeared more and more as the rights of the victims, the rights of those who were unable to enact any rights or even any claim in their name, so that eventually their rights had to be upheld by others. This conceptual displacement took place at the cost of shattering the edifice of International Rights, in the name of a new right to "humanitarian interference" (which ultimately boiled down to the right to invasion). The ultimate consequence of the excess of ethics over law and politics is the paradoxical constitution of the absolute right of the individual whose rights have, in fact, been absolutely negated. This individual actually appears as the victim of an infinite Evil against which the fight is itself infinite. This is the point at which the one defending the victim's rights inherits absolute right.[33]

It is a question, then, of the ethical irreducibly tied to the political and even to the law, a linkage which Genet, throughout his work, labors to undo. Can there be a political subject, in possession of the Rights of Man, willingly dispossessed of land and of law, that is to say, depoliticized? Žižek looks for the “universal individual” in the very failures of all “pragmatic” solutions to the conflict between Israel and Palestine, through a utopian invention of a radical new space that may be the only "realistic" choice. The very name indicates a political entity that has displaced the reference to the mythical, quasi hallucinatory symbol that is *Genet’s* Palestinians.

Genet writes that there is only one possible way to understand the Palestinians: to fight with and like them. The displacement of the Palestinians is the logical result of a nineteenth-century History, atheistic and bourgeois, which will

have used the Crusades to execute an enduring colonialism. There is no trust in history in the concluding words of "Les Palestiniens": "Toute cette histoire – l'Histoire – n'est qu'un truquage pour faire de nous des hommes faussés."[34]

Living among Palestinians – listening, writing, loving, dreaming – Genet cannot present in his work a depoliticized, de-historicized reflection of a people. He writes: "Le peuple qui me paraissait le plus proche de la terre, de la glaise, dont il avait la couleur, celui dont les paumes, les doigts touchaient le plus charnellement les choses, me parut en même temps le plus brumeux, le plus inexistant. Ses actes étaient plutôt des moignons d'actes" (312). At the close of his book, and the twilight of his own life, Genet staggers to explain the collapse of the Palestinian resistance:

> Passant en revue ce que je croyais savoir des feddayin, je pensai que la résistance, avec tout le catéchisme distribué aux combatants, donnait l'injonction d'être plus défensifs qu'aggressifs. L'acte de tuer était devenu si lointain, enveloppé d'un si nombreux rituel…[que l]es Palestiniens me semblaient avoir perdu le rapport direct, peut-être exécrable mais nécessaire quand la vie est en jeu, avec la mort de la victime (605).

This aversion to murder must be tied to the chasteness of the Palestinians' dances, whose eroticism had been smoothed away, frozen since the time of Nabuchodonosor's soldiers in the ahistorical time of the desert. The repulsion from violence is moreover boldly contradicted elsewhere in the book.[35] Arguably, an essential aversion to murder could not be proposed today; but more importantly, the question is how to reify an inexistent people other than as ardent murderers? And could indeed a people possess passports if it does not have possession of an earthly

instinct of a killer? How to grant subjective dignity without disavowing the symbolic efficacy of the 'pathological,' contingent facts? When does a revolution attain the point at which, rather than constitute a people by virtue of an endless dislocation, will precipitate, out of the social division inherent to the political game, the emergence of a people, who for the time being, will carry a passport?

**How to Read the Poetics of a Question**

These questions – inextricably, in my mind, related to Genet's echoing his own question: *Why am I writing this book*? – whether acknowledged or not by readers and critics, has stirred a genre of response and interpretation that emphasizes Genet's aim to decode Western traditional writing and its naturalized meanings. This school of reading pays homage to a tradition of semiotic interpretation that overlooks the nature of the complexity in Genet's Palestinian writings. Indeed Genet's writing induces a perception prescient of the problematics of the very real dialectic between the political and the aesthetic. This argumentation is highlighted in Clare Finburgh's essay and is reflected in its title: "Jean Genet and the Poetics of Palestinian Politics."[36] I find it worthwhile to pay heed to some passages in Finburgh's article which illustrate a restricted or self-contained reading. In her conclusion she describes her essay as

> [having] sought to explore and endeavored to display Genet's kaleidoscopic, self-conscious intersection of places, times, genres, media and styles […]. Fractured mobility mobilizes the reader, who must necessarily become complicit in Genet's inverted logic of insurrection, interval, inversion and

interrogation.[37]

Indeed Genet's writing performs these textual interventions and forays, which Finburgh calls, citing Genet, an incitement to "curiosité et vertige." The question arises, however, as to the parallelism which Finburgh draws between Genet and "his Palestinians." In a footnote she writes: "I call them 'Genet's Palestinians,' to avoid any definitive statement on the Palestinians as a social or ethnic group."[38] This symmetry supports a claim to a symbolic reality, if not 'truth,' that challenges the ethical understanding of the political subject. Throughout the essay, Finburgh is interested in drawing a logical relation – "a corollary" – between the "macrostructural thematics and […] microstructural stylistics" embodied in the Palestinian revolt and in Genet's text. She presents "insubordination to ideological norms […] as a life-affirming *mobile state* applicable to both him and his Palestinians […]. Genet allows not only himself and his Palestinians, but also his reader, to celebrate the *relative liberation* afforded by revolt."[39]

I emphasize the two existential categories – "mobile state" and "relative liberation" – to point to a certain facility in assimilating a particular empirical state of revolt or strife experienced by Palestinians into an event crowned with insignia of celebration and "pluralistic hybridization."[40] For although, as Finburgh states, Genet's writing refuses a discourse organized around causal chains, it is not at all clear that he achieves – or perhaps even aims at – the 'destruction of an original cause' as he meditates on the status of revolt and its determination by the meta-coordinates of Western narrative.

Finburgh is correct to say that Genet's loyalty is not to the Palestinians but to

their refusal of paralysis and quiescence, providing the same well-known quote from his interview with Wischenbart: "Le jour où le Palestiniens seront institutionnalisés, je ne serai plus de leur côté."[41] However, if Genet's engagement, as Finburgh says, is with a poetics that defies the absolutism of any discourse and ideology, then gleaning the "relative liberation" that a discursive revolt can proffer is indeed "life-affirming." But it does not denote, either logically or ethically, that Palestinians need to celebrate a relative liberation, or what 'relative' would mean in the *empirical* state in which Palestinian people function apart from classifying this state as 'mobile.' Moreover, assigning to Genet proprietorship of the Palestinians throws dubious light on the perception of his writing as a sustained insubordination, a refusal of domination – literary or political – and the dismantling of factitious signs.

What needs to be considered is a particular scrutiny of the ethico-political significance of the plenitude of which Genet speaks in the much-cited first paragraph of *Un captif amoureux*, the plenitude in the firstness of the blank white page that is shot through, systematically, with the blackness of signs – of the narrative:

> [L]a réalité est-elle cette totalité des signes noirs? Le blanc, ici, est un artifice qui remplace la translucidité du parchemin, l'ocre griffé des tablettes de glaise et cet ocre en relief, comme la translucidité et le blanc ont peut-être une réalité plus forte que les signes qui les défigurent.[42]

"Le désert," the nameless territory which may one day return to the Palestinians, is the "blanc" that may also possess more reality than signs and ideational representation; it is, however, states Finburgh, a space that cannot escape the indication of – or by – *notional* signifiers but at the same time can only "await

potential reconfiguration."[43]

Finburgh portrays Genet's reportage of his experience at the Chatila camp in the aftermath of the massacre as an endeavor to impart (to the Western reader) the *reality* of the experience from the perspective of a witness of the lived struggle, and at the same time to claim – or acknowledge – that an account of the real is effectively a figuration of testimony: fiction, or in her citing of Genet's words, his *féerie*. It is Genet himself who discriminates between action as function of the "monde réel" and of the "monde grammatical."[44] The grammatical constitutes the discursive mode, which is designated as "artifice," and this distinction between the political and the discursive is what she endeavors to challenge in her essay. For Finburgh, "Quatre heures à Chatila" "presents Genet's concepts of the political, human and poetic *réel* and *féerie,* all constituent parts of his sustained investigation and manipulation of the poetics of representation."[45]

This poetics of representation emblematizes a penchant among readers who are well receptive to Genet's own equivocation in relations of the real and the dream, the artist and the warrior, the political and the literary. One prominent example of the illusory dimension in the real is found in *Un captif amoureux* in the image of card-playing without cards. The fedayeen's participation in a collective effort for triumph forbids them to play cards for fear of degradation in moral conduct and discipline. A minutely detailed simulation of what seemed to the writer witnessing the scene as a game of poker unfolds before the reader with all the peculiarities and the tension of a 'live' game. It was alive indeed and crafted with the concentration and dexterity, the ceremoniousness and indignation as only real and experienced players could perform.

But it was a replica, marked by absence. To Genet it recalls a Japanese feast of the dead, a ritual called *Obon*, where invisible dead are imagined to respond and partake in an invitation to social gatherings, feast, and races:

> Le jeu de cartes, qui n'avait existé que par les gestes scandaleusement réalistes des feddayin – ils avaient joué à jouer, sans cartes, sans les as ni les valets, sans les Bâtons ni les Epées sans dame ni roi, le jeu des cartes me rappelait que toutes les activités des Palestiniens ressemblaient à la fête d'Obon où seul manquait, exigeant cette solemnité – fût-elle dans le sourire – celui qui ne doit pas apparaître.[46]

The collocation of the secular, hedonistic (card-)playing with the enactment of a conciliatory religious-like ritual exemplifies the conjunctions between the *réel* and the *féerie* which Genet conjures up throughout his writings on the Palestinians. These conjunctions represent for Finburgh an undermining of the validity of the factual, hence of the commitment to an 'empirical' cause.

The Palestinian militants/players have full awareness, then, of the affectation of the game down to the stakes put forth for gambling. For Finburgh this affectation attests to an awareness that "politics is role-play," an awareness shared by Genet who coincidentally "creates a poetic representation of these Palestinians, and concurrently highlights this representation as an illusion. Genet's investment in real-life revolt is a shift of practical medium, not of ontological premise. Politics are played out according to Genet's poetics of representation."[47] It is troubling to impute to Palestinian men and women self-consciousness that is so absolute in its self-questioning as to refuse any "stereotyped identity," constituting this refusal (as

Finburgh's Genet would have it) as the ultimate form of social emancipation and political liberation.[48] When Genet questions the trustworthiness of writing, echoing in innumerable moments the question 'why am I writing this book?', the question is very often couched in a commentary on the betrayal inherent to 'curiosité et vertige': "Mais s'il était vrai que l'écriture est un mensonge? Elle permettrait de dissimuler ce qui fut, le témoignage n'étant qu'un trompe-l'œil?" (50). Writing seems like a plea to trust what inexorably escapes and deceives, the 'silent face' of what was, leaving us with the quest for other causes for writing, be they mundane and incidental: "Les seules choses assez vraies qui me firent écrire ce livre: les noisettes que je cueillis dans les haies d'Ajloun." But these sentences, laments Genet, are so many attempts to convey reality, and can only transform it into an error.

One answer to the struggle with the inadequacy of writing is intimated in Genet's attention to the workings of subtlety. The (written) error is created on the page and is but a small bit of what actually happened, the complexity of which Genet seemed impotent to impart: "un peu ce qui se passa souvent et que je ne sus jamais décrire avec subtilité et c'est subtilement que je cesse de le comprendre." Surely Genet's long memoir recording the life – and lives – he witnessed in the camps and his overview of the historical context of the Middle East and of the Palestinian lineage of power is not inspired by the sole gathering of nuts on the hills of a Jordanian town. It is hardly without subtlety that Genet speaks of the course the Palestinian Revolution has taken: it may have reached its apogee before and during his stay in their midst, but it is with the most acute perspicacity that he foresees the subsiding momentum and inevitable enfeeblement of the revolutionary movement.

The Feddayin's true dream, he says, was to topple the twenty- two Arab nations, creating a state of stupefaction among Muslims in the face of the theological nationalism that engulfs them. What they lacked was the resources which their antagonist America had in abundance, and which they could no longer replenish.[49]

The text, however, does not speak of depleting ammunition and an omnipotent adversary but of conditions that are thoroughly and unquestionably internal; these factors are impinged upon moreover by the most disturbing of drives – sacrifice:

> Croyant aller tête altière la révolution palestinienne coulait à pic. L'entraînement au don de soi […] est presque un vertige qui empêche qu'on se donne […] mais qu'on se jette dans un précipice afin non d'aider mais d'y suivre ceux qui crèvent de s'y être jetés, et surtout lorsqu'on distingue, non par réflexion mais effroi le futur anéantissement (147).

This crucial paragraph may defy the claim both to an inability to describe subtly the scheme of the revolutionary movement, and to subtlety itself in renouncing an attempt to comprehend it. In fact these words express a grasp of the geopolitical circumstances that dictate the fate of a revolt by a small nation, or even an ethnic collective, displaced and betrayed by kin and enemy alike, a revolt that is also a defiant challenge to the social creed of those sovereignties who have 'mentored,' financed, and provided the political and ideological support to the local struggle. Genet here departs abruptly from a dogmatic rhetoric of accusation attributing the Palestinians' displacement and refugee status to the aftermath of Western imperialism and the redistribution of Arab Peninsula lands previously under Turkish rule. There is indeed a discursive deviation here which shifts the cause of the ultimate failure from

the political to the ideational or to (inevitable) self-destruction. The question to be asked is whether there is a necessary trajectory of 'self-devouring' inherent to any radicalized movement, and, if so, is it a moral bankruptcy, a function of militarization, which leads to the deformation of any ideology and the rampant corruption among even the most resolute leaders, or does the aporetic coupling of renunciation, of a ceasing to understand with 'subtleness', point to another insight, another subtlety that does comprehend, but that is not necessarily the revolutionary ideal or its teleological doom. The same paragraph begins with these words:

> De plus haut que moi-même quand je la contemplais, la révolution palestinienne ne fut jamais désir de territoires, presque terrains perdus, jardins potagers ou vergers sans clôture, mais un grand mouvement de révolte d'une contestation cadastrale jusqu'aux limites du monde islamique, non seulement limites territoriales mais révision  et probablement négation d'une théologie aussi endormeuse qu'un berceau breton.

Looking at the revolution from a "viewpoint higher than his own" or "higher than himself," Genet in fact reveals a vantage point that not only is more sharp and subtle than the one he may have proffered during the time he spent with the Fedayeen, but encapsulates a meta-knowledge, an assertion according to which this unique revolution – if not any essentially revolutionary logic – served, perhaps unsuccessfully, the cause of *vision* as such.

Genet contends here for an understanding of the true goal of the revolution as only he from the heights of his contemplation can know it. But this finer knowledge is 'subtly' questioned and must be questioned with subtlety because, although superior,

this knowledge may not correlate sufficiently with intelligible experience. With piercing soberness we are told of the phantom reporting documented by foreign journalists who were dispatched to cover the nascent revolution but who were not allowed entry into the bases for fear of exposing military secrets. Despite their evident awareness of the "infantile deceptions and pretense" characteristic of the PLO's childish camouflage and secretiveness, the journalists – either complacent or blinded by the rebels' glory – did not allude in their articles to the lack which was presented to them. Unlike Parisian cops, who acknowledge the theatricality of the sensational in their famous motto "Circulez, il n'y a rien à voir," the journalists did not dare to call out that there is nothing to see.

Genet is left with the subtlety of a question:

> Et ce livre que j'écris, remontée dans mon souvenir d'instants délicieux est, mais le dirais-je? l'accumulation de ces instants afin de dissimuler ce grand prodige: "*il n'y avait rien à voir ni à entendre*." Est-il alors une sorte de barricade dressée afin de cacher ce vide, accumulation de quelques détails vrais qui par contagion donnent vraisemblance aux autres? (124)

Or perhaps he is left with the subtlety *guaranteed* by questions, for the sentences that follow this last one are all self-interrogations, all iterations of the doubt, the elusiveness and duplicity which persisted in determining the recording of life in the camps. Genet does not deny the striking similarity between fedayeen cynical methods of concealing military information and those of 'ordinary states'; he does, however, persist in attributing his benightedness to his "extreme naivety" and "fits of absent-mindedness." These states of mind can be understood to have prevented him from

appreciating the 'real' purpose and engagement of the warriors; a convincing example is his utter distraction by the proceedings of a colony of caterpillars, creatures clueless as to the dire physical state of the men among whom they are living.

These lapses in comprehending the logic of demeanor which the Fedayeen exhibited grounds the question of the position from which Genet contemplates the specificity of the Palestinian revolution. And what constitutes this specificity? "De plus haut que moi-même, quand je la contemplais" – temporally, it is from a distance of fifteen years, a historical distance allowing sufficient sobering in realizing the internal and external political circumstances which may have brought on the demise.[50] Even as he is intimately aware of the follies and trickery of memory, Genet looks for the possibility to express, subtly, the elusiveness of the *reasons* – for his role and for their carrying on. The example alone can concretize what may not be answered: the example presents the question – ethical, metaphysical – and leaves a question mark whose ambiguity seems to allow freedom of interpretation. Reflecting on his engrossed attention to the caterpillar procession, Genet asks himself if the commander at the base, Abu Omar, had in fact seen him as a slightly light-headed comrade or rather as a slow-witted old man, who would narrate the events he witnesses with the same penetration with which he understands the excursions of caterpillars.

**Lacan's Ethics of the Gaze**

In this short passage, textual elements illuminate the intricacies in the Genetian disposition to truth, deception, responsibility, and loyalty. There are certain

moral choices that become palpable in the positions in and from which Genet contemplates and negotiates a relationship to the gaze. Lacan's analysis of the gaze helps us understand the situation of Sartre's subject in his well-known analysis in *Being and Nothingness*. Sartre situates the emergence of the 'shamed' subject as the moment of its self-consciousness in a watched position.[51] The new subjective mode takes place in two moments. In the first moment the subject is looking through a keyhole, watching a spectacle; at this point he perceives himself uniquely as spectator, with no consciousness of himself other than as spectator, absolutely absorbed by the spectacle. In the second moment he hears footsteps behind him, ignorant of the identity of who is approaching. Sartre emphasizes this ignorance for this is the precise moment when the subject is seized with the consciousness of 'being seen,' of being an object of the gaze of the other. Thus the gaze is captured in its existential anonymity, which is crucial to understanding the shift the subject undergoes: the subject now finds himself in the position of seeing himself, as an object, through the interposition of an other's gaze. For Sartre this is the moment of fading as pure subject, recognizing that the other has seen me doing what is judged as shameful. The introduction of shame through being surprised by the other's gaze changes all of the subject's perspectives on his own position in the world and is thus simultaneous to the demise of the co-incident subjectivity.

In the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan brings up this "brilliant" Sartrian episode in his own analysis of the gaze as "the underside of consciousness."[52] He calls into question, however, the correctness of Sartre's "phenomenological" exclusion between the eye (of the other who sees me) and the

gaze: in Sartre's analysis I am either under the gaze, and then I do not see the eye that looks at me, or if I see the eye, I no longer see the gaze. For Lacan it is precisely this very gaze – "that surprises me and reduces me to shame" – which is "not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the Other." In other words, the gaze that the subject encounters does not exist directly within the objective relation of subject to subject, but rather in the subject's grasping himself in the function of desire which has assimilated into itself the domain of vision.

Following Freud, Lacan distinguishes the scopic drive from all other drives – the oral, anal, and invocatory.[53] The primary split experienced by the subject (from the maternal objects) gives rise to the need of a fantasy object which will 'fill in' the lack engendered by the original cut and will heal its scar by enabling the individual to imagine himself as whole.[54] Lacan calls this site in the visual field "scotoma," or "stain," the blind spot within the scopic drive, and it is there that he locates the split between the gaze and vision. The scopic is the most elusive of the drives, for it seems most successful in corresponding to the visible and rending the body and the world whole, thus grounding the illusory relation to lack in reality.

Lacan refers to a historical moment in the development of painting, which corresponded to the inauguration of the Cartesian subject: painters were interrogating the function of perspective, or the relation of an image linked to a surface with a certain point that he calls "the geometral point."[55] Around this geometrical perspective is organized new research not only in the function of painting, but also in the mapping of imaginary space. Here Lacan recalls Diderot's work *Lettre sur les aveugles à l'usage de ceux qui voient*" – geometrical space can be conceived by a

blind man who is familiar with it, but it is rather its temporal function that is at stake and which involves apprehending the instantaneity of the field of space with time. This geometrical point in the field of vision, far from obstructing the adequacy of the visible offers it instead "as the original subjectifying relation."

Invoking Hans Holbein's well-known painting *The Ambassadors*, Lacan argues that the art object shows us what consciousness allows us to elide: the elongated unidentifiable object, suspended at the forefront of the painting becomes recognizable as a skull only as one walks away from the picture and views it from an oblique angle. This phenomenon – anamorphosis – presents evidence of the gaze by disturbing the laws of perspective, a *distortion* which allows parts of the field of vision to escape. What is significant for Lacan in the artistic experiments with anamorphosis is the enchantment it held for its creators and spectators at the time. In Holbein's painting, for example, there are two immobile figures with a series of objects between them, all alluring objects of *vanitas* symbolic of the arts and sciences.[56] It is precisely as one turns away from the fascination inspired by the painting, viewing it from an angle oblique to the painting, that one can perceive the form of the object. That is, the painting bears the gaze in it and forces us to see the absence of *the object*, or absence as such, lack. In Lacan's words: "This picture is simply what any picture is, a trap for the gaze. In any picture, it is precisely in seeking the gaze in each of its points that you will see it disappear."[57]

What interests Lacan in probing the "labyrinth" of the optical structuring of space is the ambivalence-ridden attempt by philosophers to master the relation between appearance and being. One might say that according to Lacan philosophers

are caught in the same blind spot as vision itself: even as they (beginning with Plato) point to the equivocal nature of perception, they continue to stress the supremacy of the straight line in determining perception of the visual field. The eye as organ of vision, writes Lacan, reacts not only to distance, but also to light, and thus it is subject to refraction, diffusion, irradiation and flooding, all of which exert certain 'pressures' from which the visual apparatus must defend itself through the "functioning of interlacing, intersection, chiasma."[58] The Lacanian assertion, then, does not reject the fact that a picture is painted in the depth of the eye, but rather that the seer, the subject, *is not in that picture*. The object that is painted is not constructed – as the philosophers would have it – but its *impression* introduces precisely "what was elided in the geometral relation – the depth of field, with all its ambiguity and variability, which is in no way mastered by me. It is rather it that grasps me, solicits me at every moment, and makes of the landscape something other than a landscape, something other than what I have called a picture."[59]

This analysis sets the stage for understanding the important relationship between the gaze of the seer and the gaze of which the seer is the object. The tension and anxiety which this encounter raises is brought to the fore in the work of art. In order to avert that anxiety associated with the 'being seen', a certain mediation operates between the gaze – as object – and the "picture" we perceive. This mediation is constituted by the *screen*, whose function, as described by Antonio Quinet, is "to erase the gaze from the world, from the world's show, from the Other as reality, with all the significations that help constitute our environment."[60] In other words the screen will hide the object or the gaze, but it is precisely the attributes of light – its

refractions and variability, its play with opacity – that prevent light from overflowing the screen and exhibiting the picture as whole. The play of light and opacity interrupts the screen from coinciding and merging with the subject; if the subject is in this picture which is the world, says Lacan, he is there in the form of a "stain," serving as an eyewitness to a disturbing scene.[61]

In considering the complexity of the relation between the subject and 'the picture' of the world one wishes to contemplate the function of art and its relation to a play of deception in which the subject is inscribed. Morality enters as an element in painting in so far as the essence of the painter's quest is to extend a certain kind of gaze by offering the picture as an object to be seen and judged.[62] Lacan states moreover that this offering constitutes a gesture on the part of the painter that challenges the reaction of the spectator by addressing the conflict inherent in the relation between the eye and the gaze, a conflict which psychoanalysis would regard as dialectic and inscribe in the domain of the ethical: the painting offers the spectator an object to consume and indulge himself in, to satisfy the demand of the gaze as drive, to satiate the need to retrieve a certain object which is recuperated in the gaze and which can be identified with the subject itself. At the same time, says Lacan, it invites the spectator "to lay down his gaze there as one lays down one's weapons."[63] One could say that the painting disarms the gaze from the grip it has on seeing, a grip which operates through the eye's status as nexus for a large number of sensorial functions. The painting solicits self-abandonment from the spectator. What one is faced with when gazing at a picture is a *lure* – the subject is lured to see what he wishes not to see, namely, that he is other than he is. Lacan's analysis of the painting

explains the effect of the gaze on Sartre's subject: he is surprised because he finds himself shamed, through the introduction of the other, precisely as object of gaze, as gaze itself, with no other aim than returning desire onto the subject himself, having taken a "vain detour" of sustaining his desire through gazing at the other.[64]

**The Poet as Witness**

Art presents a relation of *trompe-l'œil* to the spectator, luring him to a position from which questions of deception may arise; it undermines the idealized perception of reciprocity, of reflection, and ultimately of identification which the spectator enters into an interpretation of the scene. This assumption implies that there is a dimension of choice, an ethical dimension, inscribed in such a relationship. In the passage cited above, Genet recounts several specific details, events, and states, while alternating his account within positions that force him to 'lay down his arms,' to look at the pictures that present themselves as both the one who sees and the one being seen. Let us reread the scene Genet depicts and which exemplifies Lacan's modification of the Sartrean analysis:

> or je ne me souviens pas d'un seul article de presse étonné par le convenu, les enfantillages de ces trompe-l'œil. Le journal qui les envoyait si loin exigait peut-être, car il dépensait un argent bien réel, que les événements fussent tragiques afin de mériter l'envoi de photographes, d'opérateurs, de reporters [...] les bases devaient être ce lieu interdit où personne n'entre, tout devinant peut-être, sans oser le dire, qu'*il n'y avait rien à voir* [...]. Et ce livre que j'écris, remontée dans mon souvenir d'instants délicieux est, mais le dirais-je?

> l'accumulation de ces instants afin de dissimuler ce grand prodige: "*il n'y avait rien à voir ni à entendre*." Est-il alors une sorte de barricade dressée afin de cacher ce vide, accumulation de quelques détails vrais qui par contagion donnent vraisemblance aux autres? (124)

There are two accounts of 'seeing' in this passage. The first takes place in the 'real world,' where a battery of reporters, photographers, and cameramen sent by major Western newspapers is stationed outside the camps, with the intention of documenting, reporting, and photographing the goings-on inside the military camp. The journalists, comments Genet, could not have been blind to the pretence – the "faux-semblants" and the "*trompe-l'œil*" that marked the picture presented to the reporting crews by the Fedayeen. In fact, through the very naïve means of dissimulation carried out by the fighters, the journalists were able to see precisely what both the media and Palestinian organizations wished to elide from the picture – all that was intended for the gaze was mobilized: the setting of camps in the geographical desert, representatives of Western power apparatuses, equipment designed to capture the real object of transgression, the Fedayeen as the embodiment of the rebel/hero.

All of these elements are assembled – and summoned – in such a way as to captivate the attention toward recognizable lines invoking a disturbing yet familiar experience even if this experience is contrived. The illusory dimension of the spectacle does not prevent the journalists and their institutions as well as the public they represent from proceeding with a ritual which reinforces a perspective of exclusion: "stop secret défense –, les bases devaient être ce lieu interdit où personne

n'entre, tout devinant peut-être, sans oser le dire, qu'*il n'y avait rien à voir*."[65] It is Genet, from his – let us say – *oblique* position in relation to the two camps of participants in the spectacle, who inserts the second functional seeing, and in a few short sentences cuts through the collaboration between them in the dissimulation of the fact that at the heart of the Palestinian project is *absence*. This illusion can be maintained only if it is grounded in an 'aura' of injunction from an authority that exists outside the parameters of the present theatre of an armed struggle realized by idealistic fighters, the authority of 'The Palestinian Revolution' or 'Revolution' or 'Justice and Terror.'

Genet's preoccupation with the woeful relation between the outcast and oppressor in society found its theatrical expression in representations of the complex interplay between illusion and reality in his major plays. The figure of the wretched – the black, the prostitute, the thief, the fugitive, and the colonized subject – is performed in reversed representation: black actors, behind grotesque and distorting masks, performing the roles of the white queen, missionary, and judge in *Les Nègres* or the patrons of a brothel representing a bishop, a judge, and revolutionary heroes in *Le Balcon*. The sisters in *Les Bonnes* are relentless role-players who turn the enactment of the murder of their mistress into an unending, meticulous rehearsal whose perfectly performed dénouement prevents the actual killing. *Les Paravents* dismantles the veil of illusory identities projected on screens intended for white legionnaires and missionaries who assume their glorified roles of introducing (Western) beauty to the Arabs. But *Les Paravents* warns precisely against the assumption of the exalted image by Arab revolutionaries, an image imposed by the

white master and which sustains them in a state of pretense. We are all absorbed in vapid rituals, but the hero is the pariah who recognizes the illusory substance of the ritual and who invents a new identity from his very exclusion.

Genet acquiesced to the request of his publisher Pauvert and wrote a preface to the 1954 publication of *Les Bonnes* only to lay bare his disdain of a theatre which does not seek to negate complacency: "Je ne l'aime pas […]. A partir de n'importe quelle attitude aberrante, on peut élaborer une morale ou une esthétique, il y faut alors du courage et du renoncement [...]. L'acteur occidental ne cherche pas à devenir un signe chargé de signes." For Genet, theatre needs to depart from the visible world and characters – from conveying psychological coherence: "Bref, obtenir que ces personnages ne fussent plus sur la scène que la métaphore de ce qu'ils devaient représenter."[66]

No performance succeeds in enacting metaphor more than the ceremony ("Car même les très belles pièces occidentales ont un air de chienlit, de mascarades, non de cérémonies"), and most of all than the ritual of the Eucharist:

> le plus haut drame moderne s'est exprimé pendant deux mille ans et tous les jours dans le sacrifice de la messe. Le point de départ disparaît sous la profusion des ornements et des symboles qui nous boulversent encore. Sous les apparences les plus familières – une croûte de pain – on y dévore un dieu. Théâtralement, je ne sais rien de plus efficace que l'élévation.[67]

Here the illusion of the substance of the Host grounds the possibility for a theatre of communion as opposed to the modern theatre of *divertissement*. Only the faithful will gain access to the true theme that is always invisible and will retain its communal

meaning after the curtains fall.

"*Il n'y avait rien à voir*." The illusion of true revolutionary pursuit in the spectacle of the Jordanian camp does not fulfill the radical engagement – artistic or political – of a theatre "qui serait un enchevêtrement profond de symboles actifs, capables de parler au public un langage où rien ne serait dit mais tout pressenti."[68] Here the illusion is total which explains the melancholic tone of Genet's writing in these passages. This revolution is neither art, for it does not have the beauty of a poem, nor crime; it commits the sin of letting itself be dispersed, and much like the failed modern theatre it isolates the spectator/participant.

The scene Genet describes of the (missed) encounter between spectacle and viewers, revolutionaries and the media, reenacts the Sartrean discovery and the Lacanian interpretation of subjectivization, offering us an illustration of the function of the gaze on several levels: the subject is caught by surprise not through the other's gaze, but rather through finding himself as hidden gaze. Genet himself is not the Sartrian subject, to be sure; nor is he the other who surprises the subject – in this case the journalists – and causes the discovery of their status as 'subject.' He is clearly in a relation far more conscious – and far more subtle – of the play of deception between the object one is seeking to see and the reality of its absence. In a sense he *is* the gaze, the one who points to the function of the spectacle as screen. Even though both the media representatives and the revolutionaries know that there is nothing to see inside the military base, they perpetuate the illusion that a top secret object is hidden there. "What one looks at *is* what cannot be seen"; the screen is the carrying on of a revolution performed by a group of fighters to an audience that looks at the absence

of what they came to see.[69] The object therefore becomes the reproduction and transmission of the spectacle – its *perpetuation* – but also of desire as it could be realized in the other, the militant rebel, whose real means of power and potential remain absent. We, the readers, are constituted as subjects who can glimpse at the truth of the veil, the screen, through Genet's gaze; in this way we become his accomplices.

Genet thus situates himself in a position which undercuts the structure of fantasy that sustains the pursuit of consummation in the other: he is eyewitness to the futility of this stagecraft turned international sensation. He can evade the gaze (which he embodies) by reflecting ironically on the financial machinery (of Western media) self-justifying its hollow expenses. It is then, however, that a different subjective investment intervenes, for Genet, through the recurrent question of the book: "Et ce livre que j'écris […] est, mais le dirais-je? l'accumulation de ces instants afin de dissimuler ce grand prodige: '*Il n'y avait rien à voir ni à entendre.*'" This issue springs up and is replayed so often throughout the text of *Captif* as to enable its embodiment in the gaze "as an intervening *cause* that points to something beyond the horizon, some stain against which we can see ourselves being seen."[70] The difficulty inherent to the readjustment of our position as subjects represented to other subjects is revealed in Genet's oscillation between his disappointment at the childish and cynical imitation of methods of military secrecy, and his justification of these means through the force of the hour, or his own "naïveté" and absent-mindedness as witness. A witness who can be mesmerized for hours by gazing at a procession of caterpillars cannot be relied on to judge the righteousness of means of engagement chosen by real

actors to achieve their goal. The witness is now in a different position in relation to the "stain": his gaze at the caterpillars points to a horizon against which the reader is forced to rethink the *cause* itself and its effect in the world. Even if the caterpillars are clueless as to the growing physical stress, hence the desperation and demise, of the revolutionaries, how to justify the chronicler's equal or significant attention to the lowly side of the world? Because, precisely, "what one looks at is what cannot be seen"; because the world itself is not all-seeing, the world – sublime revolts included – as gaze can only impart the holes in being. That, in turn, leads to yet another dramatization of the subject's position in the form of self-questioning: am I seen by the commander of the camp as a somewhat dreamy but trustworthy ally, or as a comatose old poet, whose tales can no more exalt the lofty gravity of the struggle than chew over the ceremonial reflexes of caterpillars? The writer is now 'writing out' the signs which determine our representation to the other even as he substitutes himself for the other who sees him. In this way he intervenes in the supposed consistency and reliability of the object we look at and demonstrates the fundamental ungroundedness of our assumptions.

The question of writing as necessarily associated to a lie is traced in the memoir in a filigree woven from several tropes. The passage stating that the only real things engendering the writing were the nuts gathered in Ajloun is preceded by the statement that "[l]a trahison relève à la fois de la curiosité et du vertige" (49).[71] The univocal pages he produces in a book inevitably play tricks on the more or less prescient reader who is absent from the scene and does not know whether the writer can be trusted. Curiosity is linked to the exclusivity and significance of witnessing

and falls inimitably in the domain of the chronicler. Indeed, in the first part of the book fascination is implicated in the vertigo of the swirling imminence of death lurking at any minute and every angle of the camp, but this mesmerizing knowledge is an experiential state rather than documentable and transmittable information. The sight of the young fedayeens' defiance of the encroaching demise saps the writer's strength and conviction and at the same time allays his perpetual doubt as to the significance of his presence: "Aurait-il connu ce bonheur d'un vertige suicidaire si Hamlet n'avait eu ni public ni réplique?" (93).

But witnessing takes its toll, and Genet appeals to images to help us understand what seems like the vagaries of his memory:

> D'abord celle des nuages blancs. Tout ce dont je fus témoin en Jordanie et au Liban reste enveloppé de nuages très épais qui foncent encore sur moi. Je crois les crever quand je vais à l'aveuglette, à la recherche d'une vision, mais je ne sais laquelle. Elle devrait m'apparaître dans sa fraîcheur, telle que je la reçus, j'en fus l'un des acteurs ou son témoin (93).

Then the mist overcasting the real experience is drawn away and, like a theatre curtain – either precipitously or gently – the image of the smiling, mustached faces reappears and reconstitutes the writer in memory. Genet again shows his awareness of the unreliability of memory, of its role in tricking us into fabricating an image of ourselves, but – and this may be the reason for the incessant repositioning he imposes on and through this book – the question of the (subject) position is the real premise of the textual ethics in *Captif*. The peculiarity of memory is also what disturbs the gaze of the familiar, the gaze that provides grounding in the form of a screen that mediates

the facing of the void and the 'object' it beholds – "une sorte d'accablement …défaitisme, m'alourdit." The image of the clouds in their meandering and diffuse presence forces the writer to face the loss of identifiable objects, those 'facts' – the literal signs which gather memory into a semblance of a coherent representation of what was.

The other image is of a huge packing case in which the writer almost desperately searches for an object other than sawdust and shavings. Then his hand fondles the curves of a familiar object, and he retrieves a silver teapot, kept undented by the sawdust:

> Par théière je veux dire un des événements palestiniens que je crus perdu, dans la sciure et dans les nuages, mais qui m'était conservé dans sa fraîcheur matinale, tout comme si quelqu'un – mon éditeur peut-être? – l'avait emballé, préservé, afin que je puisse vous le décrire tel qu'il eut lieu. C'est pour cette raison que je peux écrire: les nuées sont nourissantes (94).

In this passage the writer faces the horizon of unintelligibility, or rather the abyss of loss: if the teapot of Palestinian events were lost, who would suffer the direst consequences? The nation of Palestine, dispossessed even further through the decaying faculties of its loyal chronicler? The editor, divested from the fruit of the prolonged enterprise? Is it the reader, forever following the promise of insight borne by the imparting of truth? Or is it the writer, left undernourished and haggard in front of an evanescent object/event/experience/justice, incapable of even defying the absolute lack of progress which revolutions promise, unless a silver teapot can conjure up the "delicious fascination" of the spirit he had witnessed.

At a later point in the book, Genet catches a (Sudanese) fedayee officer dancing, shirt off, to Rolling Stones music coming out of the car radio, accompanied by an elderly Egyptian affiliate strumming on an invisible guitar. The officer rushes off in silent indignation at having been discovered, but the resentment with which Genet is left harks back to an encounter centered on imitation – on being seen by the other. One evening the fighters gather, and Genet publicly imitates the same officer giving peremptory orders (in English) to the soldiers. As this elicited no laughter the officer attempts his own (harshly patronizing) imitation of Genet:

> Se voir dans une glace n'est rien quand on a compris que la gauche est à droite, mais se voir là, sous les arbres et sans mirroir, mobile, parlant, si cruellement décrit par la voix […]. Grâce à lui je fus devant moi le personage gigantesque découpé sur un ciel presque noir; descendant au loin et cependant si proche, un peu voûté par la fatigue de l'âge, de l'escalade, par la descente, de colline en colline […]. Je compris que je me regardais pour la première fois, non dans un mirroir appelé psyché, mais selon un œil ou des yeux qui m'avaient découvert […] de marche en marche […]. Chacun m'avait donc vu et m'avait restitué (348-49).

Seeing oneself seen by others, in the eye of the other, is finding oneself – being discovered – at the vertex of equivocation, outlined against a dark sky, limping at the end of a day of marching up and down the cloud-high hills of Nablus. Genet understands that the spectacle he is forced to watch is an encounter that reflects the negotiation between deviation and meaning – his own encounter, but one which he is imparting to the reader as the very stakes implicated in finding oneself shown by the

other against an almost black sky. There is no way to explain the vindictiveness in the imitation as devious or evil, doomed or inevitable; the spirit of the revolution did not wane because of deliberate perversion on the part of the fighters, nor due to the futility of its project. But neither can Genet the writer attain the blissful state of comprehension, of finding the counter-meaning to the failings of being – all that being which has been symbolized by Western traditional figures and which he renounced mordantly throughout his lifework – in the experience of the fedayeen.[72] He notes that it was only later that he understood the measure of cruelty that went into that little performance.

While he is still drawn to the scene of intoxication and devotion, the idyllic openness in the relations between fighters of all ranks, and which cannot be conveyed to a reader, Genet begins to share with us his intimation of the cracks that announced a different unfolding of the struggle: the music of the Rolling Stones was real but the guitar was not, "et son absence me rendit le souvenir de la partie de cartes avec des non-cartes, et tout, me parut de plus en plus décousu" (350). We see Genet smitten with admiration for the cause, but he cannot deny the counterfeit resources everywhere present in the Palestinian reality, as his memory – and his memoir – point to the dehiscence in the revolutionary apparatus which discloses its perplexing power as screen.

**The Limits of Art**

The project of Genet's book was conceived from a curt question from Arafat: 'why don't you write a book?' With a bit of self-importance Genet writes that

although he did not believe in the project of any book, this idea did not turn him off completely because he was as interested in his own curiosity as much as in its objects; it was his growing fondness of the Palestinians, however, that made him stay on (151). But throughout the book he discloses increasingly often the distances that become visible between him and the world, beginning with France and Europe, which had become *terra incognita*, 'exotic' in its strangeness (553), and the distance created by the years away from the site, which lessened the attachment and affection Palestinians had for him. Mostly his growing insight that his quest of fourteen years, and his memoir of love and admiration for the cause have been tainted by the terms staged by the becoming-Palestine – did it really want, like Algeria and other countries, to cast away the only state of political meaningfulness – being "hors la loi" – for the sake of assuming the 'heavenly' model of Law embodied by Europe? (609). Moreover, the resistance lost its momentum through the distance the Palestinians themselves drew by renouncing violence to attend to the mundane social obligations of the community: "L'acte de tuer était devenu si lointain." This ambivalent indictment was indeed subtle and perceptive – one cannot uphold the dream of justice perpetuated precisely in an ontology of idealism if one enters into laborious settlements over pieces of land, territorial legalities, and the ponderous and inelegant machinery of statehood.

'Moral standing' is often implicit in the abstraction of 'critical distance.' In order not to misjudge or misrecognize the image, the artist must look at the picture obliquely, must distinguish the different elements that organize the visual field and which structure our ethical determinations. Genet says this numerous times in *Captif*,

and indeed his work, as we have seen, subjects the screen of 'reality' to a scrutiny performed within the indispensable registers of being – the aesthetic, the political, the historical, the economic, and self-inquisitory contemplation.[73]

In a 1994 meeting in Capri on the subject of religion, Jacques Derrida presented a paper entitled "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone."[74] Derrida writes about the ways in which we are trying at this moment to think the interconnectedness of knowledge and faith, of "tele-technoscience" and religious belief, of calculation and the sacrosanct.[75] In this context he accounts for the "sundering" effect of delocalizing tele-technoscience on forms of originary resources: ethnic identity, descent, family, nation, blood and soil, proper idiom, culture and memory. In addition, a "counter-fetishism" manifests itself in an animist relation to the tele-technoscience machine which becomes a machine of evil, "to be manipulated as much as to be exorcised."[76] Thus the incalculable of faith – the trust in the (Levinasian) address of the other – is introduced at the heart of the calculable – the mechanical (including testimonial affirmation), as well as the possibility of radical evil such as "remote-control murder, ordered at a distance even when it rapes and kills with bare hands."[77]

At the very end of the article Derrida adds a note of tribute to an essay by Genet he had just finished reading, *Genet à Chatila*, recognizing the way in which the latter summons many of the premises developed in his own essay. Derrida cites Genet in the last line of his work: "Une des questions que je n'éviterai pas est celle de la religion."[78] It is true that Genet devotes a considerable part of this work to disclaim the "automatisme figé" of religious faith which sustains a circular mode of

rationalization. He remarks on the stifling hold a dogmatic system of thought has on free thought, on the theatralization of the sacred through ritual, the hierarchical archetype inherent in any religion, and the casuistic rational whereby religion is both the expression and the support of tradition, thus inevitably obstructing any attempt to fracture this tradition, notably to promote revolution – unless, he says, one proposes that the revolutionary project had already been prefigured in tradition itself. His critique of religion in this essay, sound and objective as it is, and pointing to what is common to all monotheistic religions, falls short of the more nuanced – if ambivalent – treatise of the status and mission of revolution as an ideal, and mostly of the role of art in revolution.

The Palestinian revolution exists in two interdependent domains of national consciousness: the dream and "Arabité." The dream is in a certain sense what Genet calls a "bénédiction," allowing the people to transcend the desire for land through a revolution that will include the entirety of the Arab world. While the dream is sustained by the desire to be realized, *Arabité* poses the danger of having already been realized, sinking into a patronizing position. The benediction is what upholds the resistance, what endows the leaders – its aristocrats – with the command and the ingenuity to spread it elsewhere, since, according to Genet's insight, "la marque de la modernité n'est pas l'enracinement – arbres, maisons, rochers – mais une mobilité toujours plus grande."[79] The measure of validity in Genet's assertion in so far as the political and ideological experience of the present moment is concerned should be subject to a separate examination. Moreover, the analysis he works out in order to explain the relationship between the historical origins of European anti-Semitism and

Zionism is problematic for several reasons. One such difficulty rests in the argument that Zionism as a colonial project modeled on the nineteenth-century European imperialist model, embodied in the state of Israel, is based on dogmatic reasoning characteristic of the same discourse of 'idées reçues' practiced in the West and scathingly criticized by Genet throughout this essay.[80]

In the last few pages of the essay Genet answers the question of the role that art can play in revolution and in the battle for freedom. He begins by cautiously distinguishing between economic, social, and cultural revolutions, on the one hand, and any form of artistic revolutionary change, on the other. Clearly, art for Genet stands for bourgeois art, most notably in the form of the novel. As the concept of revolution is inextricably tied to the struggle of the masses and to class struggle, the novel as artistic creation has not had impact on the status of the proletariat. But Genet does not recoil from pointing to the mutual implication of art and politics, and the difficulty in isolating an essentially revolutionary component particular to art as political expression. The striking attribute of a real artistic revolution would be too extreme, too revolutionary, since the politicians seek recognition from academic experts, who comprise the very first class deserving of destruction by true revolutionaries. Genet proposes the following articulation of his moral position: "l'art qui sera utilisé par la révolution est un art que d'autres artistes, isolés ou non, rejetteront et qu'ils remplaceront par un autre."[81] This Benjaminian proposition sustains both extremes of Genet's moral investment with the Palestinian cause: the ambiguity of this stance necessarily means first, that an artist can belong to any wing of the political spectrum, and second, that an artist cannot but wish to effectuate small

change in an unknown moment in the future. This state of affairs is in strict opposition to the revolutionary ideal.

Moreover, an intense and incendiary work of art would contest any value it finds determined and propagated by political – academic, economic, revolutionary – powers that be. What is even more disturbing, writes Genet, is the tension *within* a work of art which pulls the beholder (reader, spectator) in opposite directions: the more perfected and persuasive a work of art is, the more it lures us towards its beauty, and numbs us from contemplating its message, as in Goya's *Les Désastres de la guerre*. This claim means that art inevitably achieves the aporetic aim of rendering us passive – the more beautiful it is, the more absorbed we are by its aesthetic quality, the higher the risk of reaching a point of passivity beyond which there is blindness, or, at the extreme, death.

Here, in departing from the placating discourse of the insidious attributes of art-at-the-service-of-the-bourgeoisie, Genet touches on the complexity of artistic *engagement*, which preoccupied him even as he distanced himself from its public stage and participants. The danger that any form of art presents, even when representing the most sublime – or terrifying – reality, is to offer itself to us as gaze, to trap us, as Lacan says, through a screen of the aesthetic. This screen would constitute what Genet refers to as the themes, images, clichés, and lies with which the bourgeoisie comforts itself and which the revolution is tempted to exploit, "the locus of mediation."[82] Revolutionaries, too, can misrecognize their implication in the sway of desire and symbolize the inapprehensible in the gaze – their own vanishing in the split from plenitude – in the illusory values that in Genet constitute the bourgeois

affliction. Let us recall Lacan's understanding of paintings as an invitation to the spectator to lay down his gaze. But the beauty of the veil drawn by the Greek Parrhasios stems from the deception itself, the presumption that there is something behind the veil, and not simply from the lure of the picture. The beauty of a picture consists of a spectacle of a gesture – the gesture of painting – that appears as an image of completeness that gazes at us from its own closed autonomy and which fascinates and hypnotizes us. The moment of seeing is the moment of arrest of movement in the picture and of killing life, says Lacan. "The anti-life, anti-movement function of this terminal point is the *fascinum*, and it is precisely one of the dimensions in which the power of the gaze is exercised directly."[83] When Genet describes the encounter with Goya's paintings, he says that we are so completely absorbed by the "légèreté et la vitalité du *trait* de Goya que la beauté du spectacle nous fait oublier la guerre qu'il représente" (my emphasis).[84] The *trait* is a stroke, line, feature or gesture, the movement arrested which has this effect on Genet the spectator: "un état de passivité intérieure qui se prolonge dans une recherche infinie de la beauté, sans que cesse la passivité. C'est là son point de non-retour; s'il est dépassé, ce sera l'aveuglement, et, au point extreme, la mort."[85]

Genet's intervention as an artist captures the singularity of the ethical performance of a work of art. The effect of the gaze as arresting movement is terrifying, showing to the subject the moment of separation, of break and rupture, allowing access to the fascinatory element in loss. Genet continues his text by distinguishing the stakes of revolution from those of art: "Mais nous devons accepter l'idée qu'aucune révolution ne triomphera de la mort," and in order to surpass its own

moral limitation, to achieve moral integrity, the revolution must encourage its very adversary: the work of art.

*Un captif amoureux* is an aesthetic testimony to the genuineness and specificity of the Palestinian Revolution; in as much as Arafat and the PLO leaders are concerned, the revolution adheres to the challenge Genet holds out to it – to support the work of art without dictating an agenda to the artist. But he who laid bare the impossibility of such coexistence remarks early on in the book that although every family or people want their own bard to record and celebrate their experience, the writer of memoirs wants to be his own bard, and it is inside him that this infinitesimal and never-finished drama plays out – precisely the drama of the other (70). In "Les Palestiniens" Genet differentiates between the state of isolation imperative to the artistic creation and the need for information to sustain the revolutionary thrust. In *Un Captif amoureux*, the journalists did nothing but misrepresent the Palestinians: not even allowed to glimpse the interior, fascinating picture of the camp, all they provided were slogans. Genet knows, he who lived among them and was privy to the truth, that the negation of this representation constituted their very existence and their radiance, both of which were the answer of the real to their symbolic representation in the press (347). But then, says Genet, these are but memories, albeit as primordial as the Palestinians' own consciousness of a God: "'Le Coran est éternel, incréé, consubstantiel à Dieu.' Sauf ce mot, 'Dieu', leur révolte était éternelle, incréée, consubstantielle à moi-même." What fascinates Genet is the sight of imprisonment to which the Fedayeen have committed themselves – "prisonniers mais sur parole," held captive within a narrow stretch of land. But their poise and floating movement was as

intoxicating as that of young knights captured in tapestries (365).

Throughout the long memoir, brimming with political and historical assertions, some probing, some impressionistic, Genet insists on the vanity of seeking logic in a dream just dreamt, or in imagining a demolished bridge over a dried-up river. The revolution, for Genet, seems gradually to have lost its grounding in a symbolically valid domain: “Dans une demi-somnolence, en songeant à elle, la révolution m’apparaît ainsi, la queue d’un tigre encagé commence un paraphe hyperbolique qui rabat sa courbe lassée sur le flanc du fauve toujours en cage” (505). In front of the picture of the world one can either retreat to a point from which, seen obliquely, the symbolic coordinates of justice, uniqueness, and violence are arrested and transposed onto an object, in its very loss and absence – the fourteen years he spent searching for a mother and son couple, with whom he spent one night in a village called Irbid.[86] Or, if one has come to lay down one’s arms and look directly at the veil, one sees what Genet points to in the last words of the book: “Cette dernière page de mon livre est transparente.” Genet knows that when a transparency is turned around it is still possible to recognize the reversal. The direction of the gesture of his art is sufficient to suspend all determination except the apprehension that being is being for the other – it is permanent revolt.

**Notes to Chapter 2**

[1] Jean Genet, *L'Ennemi déclaré: textes et entretiens* (Paris: Glimard,1991), p. 89.
[2] "Entretien avec Rüdiger Wischenbart et Leila Shahid Barrada," Austrian radio, recorded 6-7 December 1983, in *L'Ennemi déclaré*. Genet was invited by Shahid to visit Beirut in September 1982. During his visit (between 16 and 18 September) Christian militia of the Haddad and Kataëb phalanges entered the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila in Beirut and massacred 2000 Palestinians. As the Israeli army was stationed at the time in the city, it was held to be complicit in the murders, after which an investigatory committee in Israel was commissioned by the government.
[3] *L'Ennemi déclaré*, p. 278.
[4] *L'Ennemi déclaré,* p. 92.
[5] *Genet à Chatila,*ed. Jérôme Hankins, "Les Palestiniens" (Paris: Editions Solin, 1992), p. 114.
[6] *Genet à Chatila*, p. 115.
[7] Edward Said, "On Jean Genet's Late Works," *Grand Street* 9 (1990), pp. 26-43.
[8] See Patrice Bougon, "Un captif amoureux," *L'Infini*, 22 (Summer 1988) pp. 109-26: "L'apparent reportage [...] c'est avant tout un rapport inédit à la langue: les mots les plus familiers deviennent, par la syntaxe singulier qui les soutient, comme étrangers [...] on pourrait dire que Genet se préoccupe au moins autant de la langue en tant que telle que de la révolution"; "The Politics of Enmity," *Yale French Studies*, 91 (1997) pp. 141-58: "What [Genet's] writing modifies is the system of negation and exclusion in general, be it in the light of rhetoric, of logic, or of politics"; Nathalie Fredette, "Genet politique, l'ultime engagement, " *Etudes françaises*, 29:2 (1993) pp. 83-102: "L'œuvre [de Genet] s'engage alors irrémédiablement du côté de cette mutilation [de tout écrit...] de ce dépouillement d'un style devenu trop subjectif, véritable tentative de mise à mort narcissique et stylistique. Les métaphores et les figures utilisées à ce moment pour définir l'œuvre à venir vont toutes en témoigner"; Basma El Omari, "La Dernière Image du monde," *Etudes françaises*, 37:3 (2001) pp. 129-46: "Le vocabulaire [de Genet] s'effondre car, racontant l'histoire de l'Autre et de son espace disparu, Genet se trouve dans l'impossibilité de dire, de nommer. Il se trouve dans le rien, dans l'invisible et l'indicible. Mais c'est peut-être là que doit demeurer l'écriture [...]. Témoin de cette réalité-fiction, Genet trace une écriture qui ne métaphorise pas le sens propre mais inscrit son absence."
[9] Laura Oswald, "Middle East Voices," *Diacritics* (Spring 1991) p. 47.
[10] "Middle East Voices," p. 51.
[11] "Middle East Voices," p. 52.
[12] "Middle East Voices," p. 49.
[13] *L'Ennemi déclaré*, p. 254.
[14] "Middle East Voices," p. 61. This is Oswald's concluding sentence.
[15] "On Jean Genet's Late Works," p. 7.
[16] *L'Ennemi déclaré*, pp. 36-37.
[17] Eric Marty, "Jean Genet à Chatila," *Les Temps Modernes* (January 2003), p. 5.
[18] Genet contrasts the Palestinians as existing in a state of dream while dreaming of a state, to the totality of Arab nations constituting a dangerously essentialized common culture: "L'arabité représente un danger en cela qu'elle est une nostalgie bourgeoise (qui a le temps et les moyens de rêver) et impose le respect à la population pour la distraire de ses véritables intérêts" *Genet à Chatila*, p. 93.
[19] "Jean Genet à Chatila," p. 23.
[20] "Jean Genet à Chatila," p. 17.

[21] "Jean Genet à Chatila," p. 19.
[22] "Jean Genet à Chatila," p. 21.
[23] "Jean Genet à Chatila," p. 30.
[24] *L'Ennemi déclaré*, p. 36.
[25] *Un captif amoureux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 147. References to this edition of the text will henceforth be noted in the body of the chapter.
[26] *L'Ennemi déclaré*, p. 275.
[27] *L'Ennemi déclaré*, p. 43.
[28] It is striking to read these enigmatic words in the light of a passage Genet wrote in the preface to a publication of *Les Bonnes*. Describing a scene of war played by youngsters in a park (as told to him by a writer), Genet explains the casting of a young boy as the Night, deemed by the players as an authentic prop for their play: "Le plus jeune et le plus frêle, devenu élémentaire, fut alors le maître des Combats. 'Il' était l'Heure, le Moment, l'Inéluctable. De très loin, paraît-il, il venait, avec le calme d'un cycle mais alourdi par la tristesse et la pompe crépusculaire. A mesure de son approche, les autres, les Hommes, devenaient nerveux, inquiets... Mais l'enfant, à leur gré, venait trop tôt. Il était en avance sur lui-même: d'un commun accord les Troupes et les Chefs décidèrent de supprimer la Nuit, qui redevint soldat d'un camp... C'est à partir de cette seule formule qu'un théâtre saurait me ravir. " This remarkable passage can be helpful in the discussion of the metaphysical element in Genet's relation to the Jews. *Les Bonnes* (Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1954), pp. 12-13.
[29] Slavoj Žižek, "How to Live with Catastrophes?" in *Empire and Terror*, eds. Begoña Aretxaga, Dennis Dworkin, Joseba Gabilondo, and Joseba Zulaika (Reno: University of Nevada, 2004), p. 207.
[30] Ibid., p. 209, my emphasis.
[31] All references to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon pertain to the 1982 war.
[32] "How to Live with Catastrophes?" p. 215.
[33] Jacques Rancière, "Who is the Subject of Human Rights?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3, (Spring/Summer 2004) pp. 297-310.
[34]*L'Ennemi déclaré*, p. 99.
[35] "ce qui me parut le plus troublant, et parfois déroutant c'était la coupure qu'ils opéraient sur eux-mêmes: totalement guerriers, ce qui fait combattre: la haine de l'ennemi, les qualificatifs infâmes qu'on lui donne, le plaisir viril du combat mâle contre mâle, l'assurance de porter haut l'étendard de son clan, enfin tous ces entrelacs qui devraient mener au corps à corps si proche que la drague demeure l'arme ultime" *Captif*, p. 555.
[36] Claire Finburgh, "Jean Genet and the Poetics of Palestinian Politics: Statecraft as Stagecraft in 'Quatre heures à Chatila,'" *French* Studies, 56:4 (2002), pp. 495-509.
[37] "Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 508.
[38] "Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 497.
[39] "Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 497, emphasis mine.
[40] "Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 507.
[41] "Entretien avec Wischenbart et Shahid," p. 282.
[42] *Captif*, p. 11.
[43] "Jean Genet and the Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 507.
[44] "Entretien avec Wischenbart et Shahid," p. 279.
[45] "Jean Genet and the Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 497.
[46] *Captif*, p.47.
[47] "Jean Genet and the Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 498.
[48] "Jean Genet and the Poetics of Palestinian Politics," p. 500.
[49] Interestingly, America here is designated as 'major target': "L'Amérique, première visée" *Captif*, p. 147.

[50] Genet arrived in Jordan in October 1970 and stayed off and on until the end of 1972. He began *Un captif amoureux* in late 1983 and completed it shortly before his death in April 1986.
[51] Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Etre et le néant: essai d'ontologie phénoménologique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1943).
[52] Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 84.
[53] Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud,* 24 volumes, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press ,1953-1974), vol. 14.
[54] This is the Lacanian *objet a* with which the subject tries to fill its own holes, to recover the fullness of its subjectivity. *Objet a* is irreducible and unrepresentable but its materiality can be grasped as the difference between language and libidinal energy.
[55] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 86.
[56] "Vanitas." *Crystal Reference Encyclopedia*. Crystal Reference Systems Limited. 18 Jan. 2007. <Reference.com http://www.reference.com/browse/crystal/33219>
[57] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 89.
[58] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 95.
[59] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 96.
[60] Antonio Quinet, "The Gaze as an Object," *Reading Seminar XI*: *Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, eds. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (Albany: SUNY Press, 1995), p. 144.
[61] Quinet invokes the persistent spot of blood which Lady Macbeth tries to wash out in vain and which thus fails to function as screen between the stain of the crime and the symbol of her ensuing madness, p. 44.
[62] Indeed all forms of art are offerings of deviation from the formulaic; painting (and perhaps cinema) can be understood as exemplifying this offer as gaze in a literal fashion.
[63] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 101.
[64] Lacan here recalls the Greek tale told by Pliny of two rival painters, Zeuxis and Parrhasius, who competed to paint a realistic illusion. While Zeuxis succeeded in drawing grapes so lifelike as to attract birds, when he asked Parrhasius to unveil what was behind the curtain he drew, he discovered that the curtain *was* the painting: "A triumph of the gaze over the eye."
[65] *Un captif amoureux*, p. 124, emphasis in the original.
[66] Jean Genet, *Les Bonnes* (Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1954), pp. 12-13.
[67] *Les Bonnes*, pp. 14-15.
[68] *Les Bonnes*, pp. 11-12.
[69] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 182.
[70] Ellie Ragland, "The Relation between the Voice and the Gaze," *Reading Seminar XI*: *Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 201.
[71] Curiously, in her translation of the book into English, Barbara Bray chose to translate 'vertige' as 'fascination'. *Prisoner in Love* (London: Pan Books, 1989), p. 25.
[72] At this point of the chronicling, Genet notes that the fundamental motive for the fighters' drive was Arafat's ubiquitous phrase, "victoire ou mort": "En d'autres temps, je crois que j'aurais reculé devant des mots comme héros, martyrs, lutte, révolution, libération, résistance, courage, d'autres encore. J'ai probablement reculé devant les mots patrie et fraternité qui me caisent encore le même dégout. Mais les Palestiniens sont certainement à l'origine d'un effondrement de mon vocabulaire. En l'acceptant, je cours au plus pressé mais je sais que derrière de tels mots il n'y a rien et peu de substance sous les autres" (*Captif*, p. 445).
[73] Genet also refers to psychoanalytic discourse in a rather unsettling explication of the qualities and history of Hebrew writing as invoked by the word designating the acronym of

the Israeli army: the memory of these letters is not only associated with Origin as presented on a top of a mountain, but also (or rather) "elle remontait d'une caverne, profonde et sombre, où étaient imprisonnés Dieu, Moïse, Abraham, les Tables, la Thora, les Ordres, revenus ici, à ce carrefour d'une préhistoire avant la préhistoire, et sans rien savoir de précis sur Freud, nous éprouvâmes tous l'énormité de la pression qui, en deux mille ans, avait réussi ce Retour du Refoulé," p. 442.

[74] "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," *Religion*, eds. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-78.

"Faith and Knowledge," p. 54.

[76] "Faith and Knowledge, p. 56. This paper was written seven years before the event of September 11, 2001.

[77] "Faith and Knowledge," p. 65.

[78] Jean Genet, *Genet à Chatila* (Paris: Solin, 1992), p. 103. The text to which Derrida was referring is "Les Palestiniens," written in Paris in the autumn of 1972, following a meeting between Genet and a group of seven young Palestinians. This text appeared first in Arabic, then was translated into English, and made its first appearance in a French publication as a retranslation from English in 1992.

[79] *Genet à Chatila*, p. 115.

[80] Indeed there are numerous discursive contradictions in this piece, some of which border on naïveté, or alternately are disingenuous: from religion to the treatment of women in Palestinian society, to the events in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games, the text is at the same time acutely prophetic and an intellectual sleight of hand. It thus deserves a thorough and separate reading.

[81] *Genet à Chatila*, p. 145.

[82] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 107.

[83] *Four Fundamental Concepts*, p. 118.

[84] *Genet à Chatila*, p. 146.

[85] *Genet à Chatila*, p. 146.

[86] Marty, among others, devotes a large part of his analysis to a reading of Genet's relationship and pursuit of Hamza and his mother.

## Chapter 3

## Jean-Luc Godard's *Notre musique*: The Adulthood of Redemption

In the 1968 film *La Chinoise*, Guillaume, played by Jean-Pierre Léaud, addresses his young Maoist comrades in a lecture explicating the historical essence of cinema, thereby erecting the axis of tension which will lead Godard through his own journey in the medium:

> On dit que c'est Lumière qui a inventé les actualités. Que lui faisait des documentaires. Il y avait à l'époque un inventeur qui s'appelait Méliès, que tout le monde dit qu'il faisait de la fiction. Il était un rêveur qui faisait de la fantasmagorie. Et moi je pense que c'est tout à fait le contraire... Lumière était un peintre. C'est-à-dire qu'il filmait exactement la même chose que peignent les peintres contemporains à son époque... Il filmait des gares, des jardins publiques; il filmait des sorties d'usines, filmait des gens qui jouent aux cartes, des tramways... Méliès, lui, il filmait le voyage sur la lune, il filmait la visite du Roi de Yugoslavie au Président Fallières. Et maintenant, au bout du temps on s'aperçoit que c'était vraiment ça les actualités de l'époque... Je dirais même que Méliès était Brechtien.

Films, says Godard, are a scientific tool invented to study life in a mostly non-spectacular way: "I'm half a novelist and half an essayist, which is not admitted in the motion picture world."[1] One may understand in this statement the particular rapprochement of the material and the conceptual that is crucial to Godard's cinema: while two images may be entirely material, their presentation in a mise-en-scène as

montage generates an idea, a thought, whose unpredictability constitutes a shift in the conceptual apprehension of the images. Moreover, not only does the exposition delivered by Guillaume allow for the broadest recruitment of creative genres, it manifests the inherent misunderstanding of categories such as 'documentary' and 'fiction' even when a deliberate ideological manipulation is precluded. This complementarity of visual elements, writes David Sterritt, instead of aiming at synthesizing images, objects, narrative or contexts, seeks to conjure up the unseen and unseeable as well as evoke the physicality of the world.[2]

Godard thus holds a position designated by Douglas Morrey as a refusal to choose: between montage and mise-en-scène, narrative and image, fiction and documentary.[3] This refusal lends itself to numerous interpretations, two of which have a seemingly contradictory nature; first, that the disruption of classical cinematic forms points to elements normally unseen – ideological and narrative editing, commercial interests and cultural preconceptions. What remains invisible – the real – is the complementarity of the forces through whose work we are subjected to views and actions which we perceive as freely made choices. The role of cinema is to open up, even if partially, the unconscious of knowledge to the associations of imagery, to the mechanism of historical occurrence. The splintering of reality is achieved by cinematic montage, and constitutes an ethics of discontinuities, cuts, and contrasts: "Behind this practice is Godard's double goal of *demystifying* and *remystifying* the cinematic experience."[4] Sterritt detects the value of remystification in the ability of the new relation between images, sounds, and language inherent to montage to illuminate the existence of an enigma or puzzle which can then no longer be signified

according to conventional features.

Second, however, is the understanding that Godard's position on the moral accountability of cinema bears on an episteme conceptualizing the cinematic experience in terms of redemption and resurrection. References to the discourse of redemption return in several of his films from the 1980s to the present, complicating the question not only of the dialectic between the visions of demystification and remystification, but also of the reversion to the very use of these metaphysical paradigms.

Godard, a "voracious scavenger in culture" in the words of Susan Sontag, who proclaimed that nothing is alien to art, and who believed that choosing between ethics and aesthetics is an unlikely option, since one will always find the other at the end of the road, insisted that cinema answer for the historical errors which are the responsibility of contemporary art. Godard's well-known indictment of cinema for having failed to document the (post) reality of the concentration camps and thus reneging on its very essence – the inextricable relation of aesthetics and ethics – invalidates any possibility of revolutionary post-war cinema:

> Naïvement, on a cru que la Nouvelle Vague serait un début, une révolution. Or, c'était déjà trop tard. Tout était fini. L'achèvement s'est fait au moment où on n'a pas filmé les camps de concentration. A cet instant-là, le cinéma a totalement manqué à son devoir. Il y a eu six millions de personnes tuées ou gazées, principalement des juifs, et le cinéma n'était pas là. Et pourtant, du *Dictateur* à *La règle du jeu*, il avait anoncé tous les drames. En ne filmant pas les camps de concentration, le cinéma a totalement démissionné. C'est comme

> la parabole du bon serviteur qui est mort de n'avoir pas été utilisé. Le cinéma est un moyen d'expression dont l'expression a disparu. Il en est resté le moyen.[5]

Expression has disappeared because taking photographs and shooting documentaries do not constitute cinematic expression. Therein lies the "démission" of cinema: it did not actualize its capacity as a means to an end.

> Indeed, images from the concentration camps constitute a powerful leitmotiv in

numerous films by Godard, not only in the epic *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, but also in those which precisely occupy the space oscillating between fiction and documentary such as *Ici et ailleurs*, *For Ever Mozart*, and *Notre musique*. But just as Godard claims that before the montage of two images one always confronts a third, an image of the two, so may a third presence have accompanied the two themes of cinema and responsibility in the above quote, namely, cinematic redemption. The criticism Godard has incurred for the persistent articulation of the image in terms of resurrection has focused on the risk of a mystical self-renouncement before the aura – in both the mythical and Benjaminian sense – of the image. Douglas Morrey discusses those critics who argue that images (those that *Histoire(s) du cinema* mounts, disconnected from the original context) "are transformed into 'pure epiphanies.'"[6] Most notably is Jacques Rancière's commentary on the contradiction within Godard's declaration: cinema has both betrayed moral duty and remained innocent in its essential and exclusive ability to speak through the image and resist its betrayal.[7] Thus photographs of corpses in Nazi camps intersect with images or scenes

conjuring up the symbolism profoundly embedded in Christological theology – imagery as well as scripture. The interesting questions to which this criticism gives rise concern the relation between Godard's questioning of conventional cinematic forms dissimulating programmatic and commercial editing, and the seeming adherence to narrative coordinates grounded in the most relentlessly familiar symbolic realm of Christianity. Furthermore, in what sense might the quest for cinematic redemption be said to reveal the failure constitutive of a dis-identification with the horrors of our cultural time? That is, how can the cinematic limitation of spectator identification be transformed into critical consideration of (and distanciation from) the self and the other? And if we state, along with Godard's commentators, that montage directs us toward the invisible scheme of the image, in what way is this absence interpreted, accounted for, and, most critically, conceived non-redemptively by Godard?

Recalling Adorno's admonition that Western thought is subjugated to reason which emerged from myth only to turn itself back to myth, and given the centrality in Godard's work of the question of causality in human freedom, the question of a discourse grounded in an authoritative trope such as redemption presents an ethical challenge to a reader who is urged to challenge these very tropes. Do the different discourses of the redemptive, of the historically (un)ethical performance of cinema, or of the invisible real, necessitate irreducibly different immanent criticisms, where each discourse is judged by each own particular parameters? Do the immanences clash or do they necessarily cancel each other out, so that immanent critique in one discourse becomes transcendent and voids the urgency of its own questions? Or is it possible to

maintain the critical power of Godard's work through the superimposition of discursive frames? In discussing these questions, I will offer a study of the possibility of understanding the invisible real of history as the ethical moment of the present in Godard.

Following closely the imagery and discourse saturated with themes of redemption, I will argue that in his films what Godard creates is a temporal space that confronts us with the fundamental ethical question: how do we make choices? This question, which in itself perhaps constitutes the redemptive act, receives an answer in Godard in the temporal element of the cinematic image. In the films discussed in this chapter – *Ici et ailleurs*, *Eloge de l'amour*, *Forever Mozart*, and most notably *Notre musique* – Godard avoids recourse to a history steeped in an art figured as *our* art (much as we are doomed to play *our* music) by conceiving aesthetically of the paradigmatically theological category of purgatory as the ethical time of adulthood.

**Revolution and its Displacement**

In 1970 the Central Committee of the Palestinian Revolution commissioned a documentary from Godard depicting the stages of a (relatively) remote national struggle for autonomy. In February of that year, he shot images of Palestinian refugee camps in Gaza, Hebron, Jordan, and Lebanon. The film was to be entitled *Jusqu'à la victoire*. In the aftermath of May '68 and the break of his collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin in the Dziga Vertov group, the collective filmmaking project of revolutionary politics, Godard was rethinking the operation of the image. The failure of a widespread revolt in France led Godard to renounce – Maoist that he was – not

so much the challenge of a global revolution, but the stereotypical reading that the image (and sound) was receiving. Having relentlessly stressed the importance of the positioning of the camera, hence of subjectivity in the art of cinema, Godard set out to erect a montage of the *event*; he was capturing the revolutionary event *in* its eventuality by providing images of the Palestinian Fedayeen in their struggle for recognition and autonomy.

In his biography of Godard, Colin MacCabe points out that "at the end, Godard discovered a new and hesitant faith in the image, though this faith would involve a much more profound recognition of death than had been available [to the creator he had been in the past]."[8] The film opens thus: against an image of Palestinian fighters sitting in the bushes and discussing the best strategy for crossing the river Jordan and beating the Israeli soldiers before being destroyed themselves, Anne-Marie Miéville, Godard's partner in filmmaking for the subsequent 30 years, recounts in a voice-over that "Comme ils sont des simples révolutionnaires ils parlent des choses simples." Godard's own narration is rememorative: "Je me souviens quand on a tourné ça. C'était trois mois avant le massacre [the massacres of Palestinians by the Jordanian army in Amman]. C'était en juin et dans trois mois tout le petit groupe sera mort. Ce qui est tragique c'est que là ils parlent de leur propre mort mais personne n'a dit ça." And Miéville retorts: "Non. Parce que c'était à toi de le faire. Ce qui est tragique est que tu ne l'as pas fait." The voice-over sustains the presence of death and the reality of subsequent historical events: even when death as a peril of revolution is avoided it is necessarily implicit in the cinematic shot. The enduring real of the void is captured in this quote by Blanchot which appears at the end of

*Histoire(s) du cinema*:

> Oui, l'image est bonheur, – mais près d'elle le néant séjourne […] l'image, capable de nier le néant, est aussi le regard sur le néant, est aussi le regard du néant sur nous. Elle est légère, et il est immensément lourd. Elle brille, et il est l'épaisseur diffuse où rien ne se montre.[9]

The documentary dimension of *Ici et ailleurs* – the act of shooting live participants in a national struggle for autonomy, and who are actors of their destiny – is here conditioned on the story that Godard will tell us, as well as on the fiction of the cause which drives the revolutionaries and the narrative that sustains it. But the shots' documentary quality itself, the grave reality that presented itself, both in the death of the 'actors' and the disillusionment of the promise granted by the narrative (of a glorious pan-Arab nation), has prevented the filmmakers from executing their project, causing *Jusqu'à la victoire* to be held in suspense.

Godard takes the fragments, where images spoke their own idiom that sounded like political slogans, home to France. The images he shot *there* – in the Middle East – are projected as part of a conversation between himself and Miéville that occurs *here* – in France. In so doing he chips away at the authority of the original soundtrack whose overbearing loudness had detracted from the real presence of the images. Thus in 1975, says Godard, the film is called *Ici et ailleurs*, "Here and Elsewhere." It becomes, in the course of five years, a project formulated as the "En Re Pensant A Cela: Ici Et Ailleurs," a question – legible in the title – which functions as a spatial metaphor for dislocation in relation to violence and history.

The original shots featured revolutionary declarations screened aside images

of revolt taking place *elsewhere*: “La volonté du peuple,” “La lutte armée,” “Le travail politique,” “La guerre prolongée,” “Jusqu’à la victoire.” The accompanying images show declarations of renunciation of peace talks, Palestinians loading machine guns, contribution of Palestinian women to the struggle, children practicing warfare. *Here*, in France, Godard stages these same frames as a *défilé* – ordinary people lined up in front of an automatic video camera, holding posters of the same above declarations – “La volonté du peuple” “La lutte armée” etc. – but the separation produces for each person his or her own static self-image. Godard poses two questions: first, how is a chain of images organized, and second, how can one construct one’s own image. The questions are broken down and literalized according to Godard’s own determination, that cinema is truth twenty-four times a second; each figure is assigned to its own single frame. He answers: usually in films, images are not recorded together, but rather one image replaces another, chases another image away; as the film moves, what is kept is the memory of previous images. Organizing memory consists in chaining them in a certain order such that everyone finds his/her place in the chain again – his own image. Time replaces space, speaks in its place, and space inscribes itself on film in a different form, which is not a whole anymore, but a translation of space and time as “sentiments que l’on se passe. C’est-à-dire le temps […] comme deux travailleurs sur la chaîne, où chacun est à la fois la copie et l’original de l’autre.” Film, that is, images in a chain, renders through this series of images my double identity, time and space, chained one to the other.

How does one occupy this space? How is a chain organized? Godard uses the then new video imagery that mixes pictures to juxtapose images of Hitler, Nixon,

Golda Meir, the Gestapo, Palestinian refugee camps, Moshe Dayan, Brezhnev – played to a soundtrack of the conventional litany of the Russian Revolution, Hitler's speeches, Vermacht songs, Hebrew kadish prayers enumerating names of concentration camps, Palestinian fighters singing.

Taking power is possible by reinforcing the place of an image when it is represented by an unrelated sound, for example, in the image of a Palestinian leader giving a speech at the Bakka camp, speaking alone, far from the people, from their silence, or an image of a worker represented by his union, or an image of a young man reading aloud from a porn novel. Godard, bidding a radical farewell to militant filmmaking, points out that international capitalism, or any ideology, fails to acknowledge that images operate in a vague and complicated system, and in fact builds its wealth on the truth that "le monde entier, c'est trop pour une image." There are no more simple images, however, only simple people "qu'on forcera à rester sages, comme une image. C'est ainsi que chacun de nous devient trop nombreux à l'intérieur de lui-même et pas assez à l'extérieur, où nous sommes remplacés peu à peu dans des chaînes ininterrompues d'images, esclaves les unes aux autres."

In another crucial sequence of the film, the director (Godard) interviews a young Palestinian woman who speaks of her pregnancy and her pride to hand over her son to the revolution. What is interesting, narrates Miéville, is not what she says, but that the one who is directing and commanding is never seen, and his orders – to straighten her head, the repetitive cuts – remain silent. Nor is the fact disclosed to the spectator that the young, beautiful woman facing the camera is not pregnant. When such a scene is projected before a Parisian family, gathered in a domestic scene

around the television, “de ce genre de secret au fascisme, ça va vite.”

The coordinates of space and time can indeed serve as a pernicious instrument that not only obfuscates the staging of ‘reality’ but also confers meaning onto divergent historical events. On the screen a hand punches in an adding machine the figures 1789, 1968, 1936, and 1917. *Ici*, the documentative system organizes events which take place *ailleurs* according to temporal categories of understanding these landmark dates of Western revolutions, thereby misinterpreting the significance of the Palestinian struggle. Godard then projects a series of opposing pairs: “Ici et ailleurs, victoire et défaite, étranger et national, vite et lentement, partout et nulle part, être et avoir, espace et temps, question et réponse, entrée et sortie, ordre et désordre, intérieur et extérieur, noir et blanc, encore et déjà, rêve et réalité.”

In Godard’s formulation of these pairs the accent is on the conjunction *et*. Morrey brings up Deleuze’s discussion of the importance of the conjunction ‘and’ in Godard’s presentation; Deleuze argues against an epistemological model conceived in terms of recognition and assimilation – new information is identified in its similarities to pre-existing knowledge into which it is integrated through suppression of difference.[10] Thus as the same French family watches a television report on the events in the Middle East, Godard iterates binary pairs premised, in contrast, on the excluding conjunction ‘or’: “Normal ou fou, tout ou rien, toujours ou jamais, homme ou femme, plus ou moins, vivre ou mourir, pauvre ou riche… Trop simple et trop facile de diviser le monde en deux.” Deleuze’s criticism resonates with Godard’s contrasting linguistic premises as well as with the contrasting visual images: our thought is troubled into carrying further the conceptual difference between “Here *and*

There" and "Here *or* There."

The ability of montage violently to disturb settled modes of thinking through an unexpected encounter indeed exemplifies Deleuze's understanding of consciousness, but it seems that Godard's insistence on the partial inclusivity of the connective 'and' reflects the complexity inherent to the encounter as such. Every aspect in the film's production from the moment when its original footage was shot points to the difficulty in assimilating the (visual) information into identifiable Western models. Godard remarks that "C'est vrai que même du silence, on n'a jamais écouté *en* silence. On a tout de suite voulu crier Victoire, et en plus, à leur place." To which Miéville adds, "Si on voulait faire la révolution, à leur place, c'est qu'à cette époque, on n'avait pas vraiment envie de faire la révolution là où on est, plutôt que là où on n'est pas." Little wonder that the monumental dates of twentieth-century revolutionary endeavors disrupt the algebraic logic of the European adding machine (which registers major events from its own historical perspective) – the Palestinian guerilla fighters, training to cross the Israeli borders and encounter its army, were in reality massacred by the army of the Jordanian State. Toward the end of *Ici et ailleurs* Godard comments: "Ce n'est pas les réponses qui vont mal, mais les questions. Et peut-être même il faudrait abandonner le système des questions et réponses et trouver autre chose." Godard does not disclaim his own reasoning which follows Western philosophical paradigms, but if Western philosophy establishes its logic as a dialectic of a begetting of questions, its failure may necessitate a different epistemological relation, perhaps a relation which aims toward or circles around the time of the image.

The footage of *Ici et ailleurs* was in storage for five years, an interval during

which Godard himself shed the dogmatic epistemological mode of Maoism, along with the dismantling of the Dziga Vertov group. The name change enabled the film's production, but it also implied a change in the ideological framing of the project.

**Godard's Position in the Historians' Debate**

In a dialogue with the Iranian filmmaker Youssef Ishaghpour from 2000, Godard's discussion turned on the legacy of Eisenstein's thought of the image: "il ne s'agit pas de la représentation du thème, mais de l'image du thème.**"**[11] But in the same interview (immediately following the segment entitled *Avant et après Auschwitz*), Godard and Ishaghpour ask "*Que peut le cinéma*?" in an aesthetic arena whose first imperative need is money. Ishaghpour points out moreover the futility of the ethical pursuit in cinema, which has succumbed not only to the financial dictates of production and diffusion but also to the failure of filmmakers and spectators to demand and create the filming itself (of the holocaust). It is therefore, he suggests, the whole culture that has failed. Godard concedes to this renunciation, adding that because of cinema's popularity it should have been first among the Cassandras to inveigh against the terror – while it was the much less potent literature that had accomplished the reprobation.

Quoting himself, Godard states in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* that, in contrast with the work of the historian, his film approaches history's rhythm through a polyphonic construction, not words: "Cela ne se dit pas, cela s'écrit, cela se compose, cela se peint, cela se s'enregistre."[12] This view of representing history as a concurrence of resonances, interferences, and *contrepoints*, as a Romanesque œuvre that shatters the

distinction between prose and poetry, image and reflection, personal lyricism and historical document, is in part a response to a debate within France (and Germany) which started in the 1980s concerning historical memory and the meaning of memory preservation. The turn to memory as the privileged cultural mode of both criticizing and reconstructing the past was in part a reaction to what was perceived as the complacency of historical researchers with post-war interests of political groups that dictated the silencing of the national past. Pierre Nora's emblematic *Lieux de mémoire* erects an opposition between history and memory, between the truth of social memory as carried by archaic societies, and the forgetfulness precipitated by modern historians whose narrative is committed to recording newness and change.[13] Nora looked to physical sites as territories of memory and his project preserves the narrative of particular significances – monuments, practices, institutions, works of art, and movements that embody French national heritage.

In contrast is the position of Henry Rousso who, in both *Le Syndrome de Vichy* and *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*, has criticized the culture of "le devoir de mémoire" which confounds history and memory, and by popularizing memory, diverted historical research from the rigor of academic methodology and subjected the study of the past to the risk of sensationalism or misinterpretation.[14] Rousso's critical analysis focused on the attempt to perform a moral rectification of the past through the courts by staging belated spectacle trials of World War II perpetrators (Barbie in 1987, Touvier in 1994, and Papon in 1997-98). He particularly objected to the call for the historian to provide academic substantiation to the case through expert testimony, arguing that not only is it not the historian's role to judge, but his

contribution, which is not grounded in precise science, cannot bear on the specificity of the case and of the individual who is being tried and would be ethically compromised. A different critique of Nora's project questions the validity of its discursive aspect which preserves the nation as the principal criterion of a memory site and assumes that these sites "have already become an integral part of the imagination of most French and German citizens."[15]

"[Le cinéma] est beaucoup plus une image du siècle, quelle que soit cette image, qu'un petit roman, il en est la métaphore [...]. Sa matière est métaphorique en elle-même. Sa réalité est déjà métaphorique. C'est une image qui correspond à l'homme moyen, non pas à l'infiniment grand des galaxies."[16] For Godard cinema has the dimension of historicity that intensifies its relation to history in ways that other forms of art cannot: it *registers* the real. Ishaghpour adds that cinema has an expository value which is the effect of technology and reproduction: it registers the encounter of fiction (cinematic art) and reality (of time). In this way cinema is inherently a site of, if not memory of the type Nora chose to commemorate, then registered moments of the prosaic and the common that embody at the same time the historical specificity of the subject on which Rousso insists, and the metaphorical value that art grants to fiction.

Attempting to comprehend the moral bankruptcy of cinema, Godard returns to the question of time as the modality which, in all its elusiveness, may offer the coordinates of an other ethics, one that departs from a philosophical system predicated on the uninterrupted engendering of questions. He attributes the historians' debacle in their research on the French Resistance to the omission of the age and

motives of its members – many were young, implicated in the action by following their partners and lovers. Historians eliminated this aspect, and filmmakers reneged on its documentation. But it may be precisely the time factor or "le rapport au temps" which operates in an equivocal manner. First, "il faut cinquante ans pour commencer […] depuis le début du siècle […] il faut sauter la génération des enfants et aller à la génération des petits-enfants. Car après, c'est perdu, si on ne le fait pas là, c'est perdu, c'est oublié, ou c'est mémorisé, ou c'est sanctifié."[17] This explains, says Godard, why it has taken France this much time (the year is 2000) to prosecute Jean Moulin and Maurice Papon in an unimpressive output of justice.

At the same time as Godard indicts historians for slighting the historical detail, he also acknowledges his own need of the time lapse between his debut as filmmaker and his more systematic engagement with the concentration camps (in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and other films):

> J'ai commence à faire des films en 60 [...] en l'an 2000 cela fera exactement cinquante ans, c'est juste le temps de m'intéresser à ces histoires-là. Il y a plus de temps entre mon premier film et le dernier que pour mon père entre la guerre de 18 et la geurre de 40 [...]. A ce moment-là je peux me dire: "*Mais comment pensait-il?*" [...]. Cette dimension du temps, c'est le cinéma qui devrait s'y consacrer, le cinéma bien fait, même documentairement, le cinéma peut donner cette dimension du temps qui existe pour chacun.[18]

Cinematic thought, for Godard, is first and foremost related to the way in which History manifests itself through necessary mediation – "History is the family name, parents, children, literature. Painting, philosophy." Hence the Oscar Wilde

inscription that appears in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: "To give an accurate description of what has never occurred is […] the proper occupation of the historian." The lackluster motives of many resistance members remained outside the interests of historians since, says Péguy's Clio at the end of *Histoire(s),* for history time is horizontal and its events take place along its line but history remains outside of the events. Memory's engagement with time is, by contrast, vertical: it does not always account for events but it is always in them, it penetrates and probes them. Godard conceives of Hegel as a novelist of philosophy because for him History and philosophy are imbricated as a *remémoration* and not as a chronological history written in the indicative.[19] Hegel's dialectic, if taken in correlation with Godard's endeavor to render on the screen the total and totalizing representation of the history of cinema, is inherently dependent on a mediating element and is thus subject to the vagaries of contingencies. One could say that contingency for Hegel is what History's "noms de famille" is for Godard; History must be conceptualized as "a novel" and not as chronology .

**Is the Image a Moral Imperative?**

Godard is not a historian, but his filmmaking is anchored in the palpability of the relation between image and history, a relation that determines or destroys ideologies and is therefore essentially ethical. In referring to the (lack of) images from Auschwitz, Godard qualifies the cinematic vacuum created by the absence of images from the camps as the ultimate moral failure of cinema as such: the holocaust is as much a founding criterion in the judgment of aesthetic engagement as it is in its political counterpart. A debate around the moral responsibility of representing Auschwitz cinematically was therefore impending, and its main (French) contestants

were Claude Lanzmann and Godard. Lanzmann's film *Shoah* is preeminently known as much for its rejection of archival documented images and footage of the concentration camps, and the prohibition on any historical image that would "obscenely" attempt to represent the experience of the camps, as for the prohibition on the question "Why were the Jews killed?"[20] For all human beings who were not subject to the real experience, including artists, the only possible access to the reality of the camps is through the testimony of survivors (and perpetrators). Hearing the witnesses, we can become witnesses as well, even if twice removed from the stage. But the experience can be retrieved only in the symbolic, in the verbal reconstruction of the event which would undermine any distraction, alienated identification or rationalizing academic approximations that impede an unmediated and absolute gaze at terror. The refusal to understand the "Why?" of the holocaust is an ethical as much as the operative position for Lanzmann and can be equal only to blindness:

> Aveuglement doit s'entendre ici comme le mode le plus pur du regard, seule façon de ne pas le détourner d'une réalité à la lettre aveuglante: la clairvoyance même. Diriger sur l'horreur un regard frontal exige qu'on renonce aux distractions et échappatoires, d'abord, à la première d'entre elles, la plus faussement centrale, la question su pourquoi, avec la suite indéfinie des académiques frivolités ou des canailleries qu'elles ne cessent d'induire.[21]

The intellectual debate was polarized further with the (re)publication of four photographs from Auschwitz taken in 1944 by a former *Sonderkommando* in an album entitled *Mémoires des camps*: *Photographies des camps de concentration et d'extermination nazis 1933-1999*.[22] The album contained a phenomenological reading

of the photographs by Georges Didi-Huberman. The publication of the photographs and the essay elicited harsh criticism by Gérard Wajcman in *Les Temps modernes*, whose view echoed Lanzmann's negation of the image, based on the image's inherent inaccuracy, vagueness, fluidity, and openness to falsification: "La Shoah fut et demeure sans image."[23] In *Images malgré tout*, Didi-Huberman provides further readings of the photographs as well as a scholarly riposte to Wajcman's absolutist determination that no images exist since no *one* – moment, instant, image – can capture the immensity of numbers, deaths, destruction, time.[24] Wajcman (and Lanzmann) uphold the fantasy of the two excesses, zero and one, of an "image toute," which can reduce the multitude of incoherent sounds and of impure angles into an organizing word; this, suggests Didi-Huberman, is akin to the unified biblical Law.

Didi-Huberman quotes Wajcman's words on the visible and invisible: "Ce qu'on ne peut pas voir, il faut le montrer," which brings him to conclude that "ce que ça montre, ce qu'il n'y a pas d'image."[25] To this imperative only the absolutist notions "l'image nulle," "l'image une" or "l'image toute" can respond. By contrast, Didi-Huberman adduces a dialectic approach to "montrer," arguing that in order to show what escapes us, one must set up, assemble, and even stage – "monter" – the "figural detour" by presenting a plurality of views of the phenomenon. Precisely because we cannot see death or desire or time, it is the task of the artist to "mount" these insights in time and space, and it is the charge of film to take on "les monstrations des différences".[26] Thus he quotes Godard for whom "Il n'y a pas d'images, il n'y a que des images. Et il y a une certaine forme d'assemblage des images: dès qu'il y a deux, il y a trois."[27]

Godard goes further to say that it is in montage that one encounters destiny; montage executes what film as art form does: “faire penser l’impensable.” In its dialectical procedure it derives its method from philosophy but does not reabsorb or fuse images to a synthesized conclusion. For Didi-Huberman the answer to the question of representability lies in the dialectical property of montage as Godard fashions it in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* where the image is neither totalitarian and unique, nor dispersed and disconnected. Showing an image of the camps, “ce n’est pas la perdre dans un magma culturel fait de tableaux, d’extraits de films ou de citations littéraires: c’est y donner à comprendre quelque chose d’autre en montrant, de cette image, *la différence et le lien* avec ce qui l’environne pour l’occasion.”[28] Montage is (Godard’s) ethical gesture in its opting to confront the archives, with the objective of diminishing the likelihood that images, as *an* image, or as *certain* images, be either sacralized or denied.[29]

**The Aesthetic Subject and the Risk of Identification**

History, then, is a work of art with which cinema has a kinship through its capacity to invoke relations of kin between images. However, these relations must be unfurled in time so that their historical truth not be assimilated to our fixed paradigms and be allowed to be seen in its difference. Moreover, it is crucial that parameters of difference not be translated in terms of alienated tolerance. What froze Godard and Miéville and caused them to halt the production of *Jusqu’à la victoire* was perhaps not so much the realization of the particularity of the Palestinian Revolution as the reminder of the kinship articulated by Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit as “inaccurate

replications," the overlap in registers of being in which the 'here' and 'there' open up new versions of shared experience.[30] I am drawing here on the analysis by Bersani and Dutoit of two different films by Godard, *Passion* and *Hélas pour moi*. In the latter film, the uncertainty of Rachel's sensual encounter with God, as well as the ambiguity in Simon's (her husband) departure, are represented through a recurrent disappearance within the same frame. These

> immobile moves […] are at once ordinary and (as the musical chords suggest) catastrophic: the multiplication of the individual's positionality in the universe is, necessarily, a lessening or even a loss of individuality. We *are* not as distinct subjectivities but rather as that which gives *appearances* to different modes or functions of being.[31]

Just as, according to Bersani and Dutoit, the individual does not go *from* one register *to* another but follows "alternative unfoldings of events that don't 'communicate' with one another but inaccurately replicate one another," so does Godard and Miéville's questioning of their own motive for intervention in the Other('s) revolution arise from a revelation that their impetus for dissent is distinctly – or ontologically – in kinship with that of the Palestinians.

In addition to the analysis of the image enlisted to serve political propaganda, *Ici et ailleurs* contributes a complex critique of the relation of the image to capitalistic mathematics denying difference in favor of exchange value. Indeed the scenes described above attest to the ideological manipulation Godard was discovering in this just revolt. But it seems that the ontological categories of which Bersani speaks, such as 'realization' and 'potentialization,' manifest in this film the necessary if

'inaccurate' replication of experience. Being which is *realized* is the one everyone knows: the mechanism of capitalism and its relation to desire, the ideological and epistemological buttressing of meaning and narrative. (From Deleuze to Lyotard and Godard, the discourse of the academic Left has well acknowledged the constraints on its own discourse.) We have learned to beware, one hopes, of assimilating the Palestinian cause of revolution to a Western revolutionary model, thus voiding it of its particular meaning.

But the inaccurate replication in this film is more complex, for what we see is the *potentialized* form of being: the Palestinian revolutionaries did not succeed in their endeavor; moreover, and more critically, *they* exhibited a tendency to stage the imagery and rhetoric of their struggle in much the same fashion as *our* media does. But what becomes manifest here, through the montage, is the relation between 'here' and 'there': Godard and Miéville could deliver the documentary originally commissioned from them in a form of praise to revolution precisely because upon their 'displacement' back to France they saw that the potential for an ideological as well as aesthetic transformation involves a move, a doubling or plurality of positions, plurality of place and of time, a Rethinking, a "Repensant Le Ici Et Ailleurs" as the inscriptions insist throughout the film**.** Had they produced the film immediately following the shooting, they would have created a blueprint for sameness, a declamation of right *or* wrong, true *or* false, real *or* fictional that would reinscribe the claims of the other within a fixed identity. In interrogating their own motivation they pointed to the questions inherent to any attempt to manipulate the image, including the use of violence for a just cause.

This questioning enables the potential for multiplying individual perspectives or subjective mobility, but as such, it implies an inevitable concession. Bersani and Dutoit argue that differences, for example between love and (factory) work in *Passion*, are operational rather than essential in manifesting any mode of being. Thus in *Passion* work is not reduced to the purely mechanical nor is the artfulness of lovemaking obfuscated by denying the counterpart of the two functions. But this likeness is foiled by the implication that individuality is subjected to participation in certain recognized gestures such as harmony in love or efficiency in work. Thus the loss of distinct differences can imply a loss of autonomous subjectivity.

The writers suggest that the temporal confusion in Godard's story renders the demarcation between past and present impossible, forcing the spectator to see what he may – or may not – have seen. If there is a persistent appeal in both the work of Godard and his interviews, it is the injunction to see. Montage in its essence is a mode of seeing; in fact his well-known invective of talking cinema accuses the latter of destroying montage in order to undermine seeing: "Ce qui compte, ce n'est pas ce que l'on voit dans l'écran de contrôle de la petite caméra, c'est ce qu'on ne voit pas. Une chose qu'on ne voit pas, il faut y croire, la vouloir."[32] Godard struggles for this mode of seeing, even as he implores the "book people" to approach his film (*Notre musique*) visually: "See it as a book. But *see* it, don't *read* it."[33] Near the end of *Hélas pour moi* the publisher who had arrived to investigate the mysterious event says: "Le reste s'est déroulé au-delà des images et des histoires." He is then corrected by the traveling salesman (angel): "Pas au-delà. En deça des images et des histoires." The probability that the event took place is not in fact determined by a verified factual

past because the past "is never dead. It's not even past." Alain Bergala writes that the present is always both a distorted ("dream-like") repetition and a somewhat rectified version of the past: "ce qui a été a été aussi un peu autre chose que ce qui a été: cet homme est parti et n'est pas parti. Simon est revenu et n'est pas revenu. Pour Rachel il a été son mari et pas son mari, son mari et aussi son amant, son homme et aussi le dieu."[34]

In Godard's film, the comfort of watching a consistent individuality in a character is jolted by the surreal displacement and disappearance from the frame of both Simon the husband and Rachel. The affair – in the romantic as well as the empirical sense – between God and Rachel takes place on the side of or prior to – *en deça de* – connections which validate fixed, self-governing, individuated identities, but not beyond – *au-delà de* – the familiar. Interspersed with our assumed, realized selves are scraps and fragments of subjectivity that contain crossing points compatible with other subjects. This attribute, write Bersani and Dutoit, implies a certain loss of independent individuality but one which traces immanent congruity with the other and projects a beam (of light) onto the invisible experience that otherwise remains shut – off, out, in – the boundaries of the individual subject. The authors argue that these coupled attributes and connections in the film point no more to a real present than to an imagined past, a disclosure that the aesthetic experience judiciously offers:

> We cannot become permanent works of art; the aesthetic subject is not a monumentalizing of the self, but rather should be thought of as a renewable retreat from the seriousness of stable identities and settled being. As this

> suggests, the lightness of imaginary being is an ontological gain, but it is also a psychic loss. An artful ascesis is the precondition that allows us to reoccur, differently, everywhere.[35]

Everywhere is here and elsewhere. Morrey accurately describes Godard's juxtaposition of Jewish prisoners in Nazi camps – labeled 'Musulmans' by their subjugators – with Palestinian victims in Amman as protest against a comparison between the two events rather than diminution of the difference or an attempt to dehistoricize their relative value. He states, similarly to Bersani and Dutoit, that in *Ici et ailleurs* Godard visualizes history as an accumulation of catastrophes which need to be represented through brutal encounters. Morrey is also right in claiming that the disintegration of the Western empire did not result in a loss of dominion; rather, geographical control was replaced by manipulation of the imagery produced in the previously possessed territories. He goes on, however, to regard Godard's problematization of the operation of the image as consisting mainly of "return[ing] images to those from whom they have been stolen, or better yet to encourage them to produce their *own* images and sounds."[36]

Morrey selects precisely Godard and Miéville's analyses of the exploitation in image-making to support an argument which in fact constitutes part of Godard's object of criticism. Morrey alludes to the scene of a young girl reciting a revolutionary poem against the backdrop of a Western-looking theatrical stage of a ruined building; in another – one sees the illiterate woman reciting a text; yet another contains the pregnant actress feigning to bear a martyr for the revolution. Indeed, in *Ici et ailleurs* Godard interrupts the sequential screening of these shots intended for

*Jusqu'à la victoire* and reflects on the Western filmmaker's maneuvering of the interviewees and shaping their images into a transmissible package befitting Western conceptual palates. "In all of these examples, then, we see how the western filmmakers have attempted to impose their own agenda on the Palestinian revolution rather than allowing the Palestinians to speak for themselves and to set their own agenda, to exert control over their own images and sounds."[37]

But Godard's analysis is more complex and far-reaching: in a scene depicting a Palestinian leader addressing a crowd of men, Godard's camera illuminates less the intrusion of a staging imitating a Western rubric than the similitude in the operation to which all image-making resorts when it is driven by ideological agenda. It is true, as Morrey writes, that *Ici et ailleurs* discusses and theorizes its own failure; but as a theoretical manifesto of the images in modern media it reaches beyond the dialectic of west versus non-west in which the discursive paradigm of ideology operates exclusively and unilaterally. Such a perception would be an understanding but not a theoretization. Godard's film is a theoretical meditation in so far as it reflects on the modes of thinking that underpin not only the here, but the elsewhere as well. Godard demonstrates the means by which the wielding, staging, and fabrication of imagistic meaning operate through (inaccurate) replication in both Jordan and France. Visual interventions must be studied *en deça*, on this side of ideological identities as such, and not in the beyond of a structural duality where the true confronts the false. The achievement of Godard's theorization is not only the depiction of Western media as it arrogates the images of a struggling people in order to project a self-justified agenda at home. More crucially, Godard directs his expository montage toward multiple

questions that constitute the core of representation: documentary and fiction, difference (or repetition) inherent to ideologies, the possibility of insight that spatial and temporal displacement allows.

The psychic loss which Bersani and Dutoit recognize may entail a destabilization of the belief in a cause – it is not by chance that the period after *Jusqu'à la victoire* marked Godard's departure from Maoist disposition. Inevitably the film had to be reborn in the full sense: reedited, rethought, re-placed, re-baptized, renamed. But its traumatized montage gained from making visible the facility with which realized visual and political connections are made and the fragility of imagined justice. The subject cannot be "monumentalized" even within a revolution, its cause cannot be totalized into victory; but the repetition or similitude that emerge between the space – and the time – that is there, and the one that is here, may offer an interval that redefines the notion of identification. Such identification can be conceived not in terms of redemptive "identitarian myths" but as a relational ontology which, as Bersani and Dutoit suggest, includes extensions and intersections between subjects and states: "We have, after all, been richly nourished by those myths, and our at times exalted renunciation of them would be rather glib if it were not tinged by the melancholy of an always threatened silence and an always threatened blindness."[38]

The prevailing approach in film theory since the 1970's has followed the theoretical model promulgated by Brecht in his quest to purge theatre of the effect of identification that appeals to the spectator's imaginary and undermines the declared purpose of political cinema. In *The Subject of Semiotics* Kaja Silverman affirms her own inclination to equate identification with "interpolation into the dominant fiction."

The Brechtian appeal to reason seeks to draw the spectator into a conscious engagement with the performance and to prevent him from identifying with the fictional character.[39] Silverman proposes a departure from the prevalent critical strand as well as her own prior strand in her 1996 work *The Threshold of the Visible World*; she cites writers who theorized identification as the inducement to recognition inherently – and explicitly – confirming the authenticity and ideality of the reigning ideology.[40] "Why this adversarial relation to identification, particularly in its 'secondary' or diegetic forms?" she asks; her critique focuses on the commentators' assumption that in order to be transformative political cinema must continuously expose and annul the process of identification. In this work she rethinks her own premise and argues for the significance of identification in the subject's recognition of its potential aptitude as agent.

Silverman insists that the notorious "lure" of identificatory film narrative may in fact be "one of its greatest political assets, since it represents the potential vehicle for a spectatorial self-estrangement."[41] Her critique is directed at the paradox she locates at the heart of the Brechtian aesthetic model of 'distanciation' (*Verfremdungseffekt*); for Brecht, critical thinking can be generated in the spectator if an identificatory transport is thwarted and the spectator is alienated from the aesthetic embodiment of the imaginary. However, the distanciation effect is undercut by the spatial feature of Brechtian theatre in which the element known as the "fourth wall" is eliminated: for Brecht the spectator's engagement with theatre is equated with the mandate of feeling 'at home.' This summoning of the spectator to physical participation constitutes for Silverman the disruption of distanciation in that the

spectatorial ego is exempt from the self-estrangement through the elimination of the distinction between stage and house: “Brecht safeguards that ego against alien images, and, so, leaves unchallenged the terms of its bodily parameters. He thereby installs the principle of the self-same body at the heart of epic theater.”[42]

According to Brecht, then, the cinematic experience is incapable of affording the spectator with an effective space of intervention for the boundaries it establishes are irreducible. In contrast to his reproach, and to the commentators who discuss the introjective identification in which film is founded, Silverman argues for cinema’s radical potential for political statement and agency in so far as it is capable of modifying the gaze of the spectator since it “alters the terms of bodily reference.” The importance of Silverman’s critique lies in its distinction between alienation as means or ends: alienation of the viewer from the screen is not sufficient in promoting political agency if it does not also foster alienation of the viewer from his own “sensational ego.”[43] Against the convention that explains identification in terms of incorporation whereby the spectator’s gaze is one with the camera and takes over the eyes of the characters, she draws on a variety of writings in order to construct an excorporative model of cinematic identification. She refers to Eisenstein’s vision of cinema as a medium which can transpose the viewer elsewhere. This “transubstantiation” in fact accounts not only for the transformation of the actor who undergoes a “self-annihilatory identification” in his enactment of the role but also for the spectator who is “catapulted” from familiar social perspectives into an unknown frame of reference.

A “political self” would not be grounded in a self-apprehension as agent if it

were exclusively conceived in terms of "an integral self" which either rejects or assimilates difference. The transformative identificatory position can precisely project the imaginary perceived in identity schemas into other schemas and thus 'lure' the spectator into a conscious self-estrangement, which, suggests Silverman, can also bring "intoxicating pleasures." She proceeds to elaborate her premise of cinema as an aesthetic medium capable of spiriting the spectator away from him- or herself with the aid of the Benjaminian notion of 'aura' for which she proposes an original theorization. In Benjamin's text "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Silverman finds an understanding of aura which deviates from the prevailing reference to its loss as a consequence of mechanical reproduction; aura is rather a promotion of a subjective relation at once enhancing distanciation from the scene and "irradiating the scene of representation with ideality."[44] Her reading of Benjamin sheds light on Godard's disposition toward the sacred and redemption in his later films, beginning in the late 1980s with *Je vous salue Marie*, and will bear particularly on my discussion below of *Notre musique*.

Silverman's reading is illuminating for it establishes the terms on which an ethical understanding of identification in cinema is predicated, or even those which constitute cinema as an ethical aesthetics. In an attempt to understand Godard's turn to the tropes of resurrection in his later films other than as a recapitulation to age-old venerable premises, I will follow her reading of Benjamin's concept of the aura and Lacan's writing on the idealization of the other. The two parameters for such a reading – distanciation and ideality – must account for the intricacy of the relation of distanciation to identification. In both "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical

Reproduction" and "Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Benjamin notes that the aura of an image ("cult image") is linked to its "inapproachability" and is thus less physical than psychic. The object gains its auratic aesthetic attribute through a metaphoric conjecture; the particular way of looking at an object is an investment (*Belehnung* or "investiture") of that object with a relation to an other: "To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return."[45]

Silverman offers a Lacanian analysis of the attribute of exaltation which Benjamin associates with our perception of the cult-object, or its "radical idealization." The Lacanian interpretation of sublimation, as developed in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, distinguishes the object of desire as a libidinally charged object signified by metaphorically displaced memories and as such inherently unattainable. The desired object is elevated to the level of the "Thing" and becomes sublime, or, according to Benjamin, exalted in auratic desire. For a sustained relation between a subject and its idealized other to take place, both Benjamin and Lacan hold that a distance must be maintained which prevents the internalization or incorporation of the ideal image into the subject's own psychic schema. The identification which accompanies love is for Lacan the gift of acknowledging the other's look.

For the work of art as well as the person, sustaining the Benjaminian aura requires the renunciation of its assimilation within the spectator's frame of representation which would be tantamount to an act of violence upon the other's very being. Thus for Benjamin, aura is commensurate with the imperative to preserve the specificity of the object's otherness, and this mandate exacts the concretizing and highlighting of the frame of representation, "the hyperbolization of the fourth wall."

In her advance of a theory of political cinema Silverman grapples with Benjamin's insistence on the proximity of cinema to photography, therefore with his condemnation of both aesthetic genres as 'antiauratic' because they promote incorporative identification characteristic of closeness rather than distanciation. Mechanically reproduced films and photographs bring the image closer and provide connection to our own world; they reinforce our own referential axis and divest the image of its particularity, homogenizing it. However, Silverman formulates a discerning reading which differentiates between the photographic and cinematic image and indeed redeems cinema from being seen as enhancing the principle of the self-same body.

The operative component of the cinematic picture is its "spatial remoteness and temporal proximity" (while the photographic image involves the reverse – spatial proximity and temporal remoteness); cinematic sounds and images evoke acute sensory figuration and are thus able to "invade the present" as perceptual reality.[46] But even as the screened image and sound seem to materialize themselves in – and as – the absolute present, their perceptual reality, says Silverman, is not that of our familiar now. Thus the filmic order remains demarcated by its borders which separate it from the spectator's space. Moreover, the filmic image is the point of convergence of the beam of light projected by the technological apparatus and the 'auratic' and palpitating essence which light confers on the image.[47]

The challenge to political or transformative cinema is to find a way to enhance the exteriorizing (excorporative) identification derived from the irreducible break between the spectator's space and the vividness of the image without assimilating the

image into the spectator's normative representations. In contrast to dominant cinematic representation, which allows the spectator to attribute its ideal values to the object, Silverman proposes a cinema that would emphasize the break between spectator and object, thus highlighting to the spectator its own contribution to that ideality. Transformative cinema is contingent on its potential drawing of the spectator to an unfamiliar elsewhere in which the aura, or ideality of the image, involves an unknown appearance, while discouraging "the return journey." Thus both Benjamin's theory of the aura and Brecht's enlisting of alienating strategies make manifest "the marking maintenance of the representational frame."[48] This aesthetic – and epistemological – confrontation is an unyieldingly conscious practice and must be constituted as a retroactive and active endowing of the aura on a hitherto depreciated object, or in Silverman's words: "It must, in other words, be marked as a garment rather than as the body itself."

**The Cinematic Image as a Redemptive Element**

In *Ici et ailleurs* Godard seems to be pulled by the necessity to understand the mechanism of idealization and its implication in incorporative (assimilatory or idealizing) identification. He is intent on breaking down the assembly line of aesthetic as well as industrial production. The disjoining of the temporal dimension from the spatial in the construction of the image is concretized by such means as the presentation of inscribed slogans separately from sound, or the disclosure of repeated instructions which the militant woman receives from the director. Identification of the assimilatory kind demands that the numbers add up: the product exits the production

line in its flawlessly pleasing package; things and people participate in the capitalist circuit under an assigned exchange value which keeps adding zeros to the machine; cinema projects images whose meaning is integrated to settled memories of previous images (thus images of holocaust corpses can be juxtaposed with Palestinian victims); (French) monumental historical dates are intrinsically representative of all global events; atrocities are justified in the name of demagogic slogans.

The historical events of the September massacre which arrested the production of the idealized *Jusqu'à la victoire* forced Godard to question the connections between imagistic representations of calamitous events. Thus the time elapsed during the (conceptual) processing of the footage brought on a new catastrophe, the 1972 Munich Olympiad, which was the scene of the seizure and assassination of eleven Israeli athletes by Palestinian militants. Godard works through the way the media handled the broadcasts of the event and illustrates the inevitable collaboration between 'good' and 'evil' in such a tragedy: the Palestinian radicals relied on the hyperbolized visual dissemination that their act would procure because of the massive coverage of the Olympic Games. Moreover, in a later interview, the terrorists stated that they had intended to negotiate an exchange with the media, not the police: airtime to broadcast their grievances against Israel in return for the kidnapped men. According to the Palestinians, the German authorities declined – for reasons of principle? justice? aversion to disrupting the games?

The final product, *Ici et ailleurs*, is a film wrought with the implications, distortions, and consequences of any cinematic project that does not 'take the spectator elsewhere'; importantly, the spectatorship must include the filmmakers themselves. In

Jordan, Godard was shooting images that upheld the very terms that reconstitute the self-same parameters on which we base and valorize our ego. Elsewhere, years later, distanciated from the idealized revolutionaries, Godard's new position has not only deranged the normative Western mode of representation (documentary depicting revolutionary cause), but has unraveled the mechanism structuring incorporative identification: from up-close the spectator can recover the parameters of totality: victory or defeat, always or never, we or they… Here, Godard needed to break down the image as product into its elemental components in order to reassemble cinema as an aesthetic production that takes time into account as a moment of transformative identification.

In a 1997 interview Nicolas Truong asked Godard to comment on his interest in the resistance period and on the failure of cinema (as well as the novel) to restitute the events of the period. In his response Godard brought up Rossellini's *Rome, Open City* as the exclusive case of a cinema functioning as political:

> *Rome ville ouverte* est un film de résistance parce qu'il est un film de résurrection. Ce n'est pas un hasard si cette œuvre est née en Italie, la nation la plus absente de la guerre en même temps qu'une terre gardienne du christianisme. Seul le christiannisme s'est occupé d'images. Saint Paul disait à peu près ceci: "L'image viendra au temps de la Résurrection."[49]

In 2000, Ishaghpour mentions the same quote as it appeared inscribed in a frame of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*: "L'image viendra au temps de la résurrection." Ishaghpour suggests that the quote expresses regret for this mythical time as well as hope for the time beyond its death. This epic film, says Ishaghpour, functions in a

two-fold way, or rather, to the power of two in its relation to mythic cinema through both destruction and redemption or resurrection. The superimposition of quotes or images from an original film creates a contradictory or paradoxical third image interfacing between a mythically evoked network of memory and association and an artistic dimension which is Godard's own.[50]

Ishaghpour expounds upon the redemptive character of montage in Godard by referring to Goya as exemplifying a painter who painted the horror of humanity, quite simply, horror without redemption. The absolute horror of the world is represented through art as intrinsically bound up with beauty; the permanence of terror has a mythical dimension that "semble trouver sa rédemption dans l'art ou dans le christianisme, ce qui est la même chose, dirait-on. Puisque lorsqu'il y a l'orchestre dans les camps, vous dites que l'art naît de ce qui a été brûlé et vous superposez, à l'image du camp, la Vierge à l'enfant de Grünwald."[51] Godard comments that the identification of Christianity with art, or with the cinematic image as a redemptive element, is not grounded in religious belief, but in a conception of religion – particularly Christianity as the principal imagistic creed – as an historical phenomenon, a movement of thought. Ishaghpour remarks on the recurrence in the film of the quote that "the image is of the order of redemption" that it is an allusion to a certain redemptive ontology of cinematic art, a sense in which cinema ought to have been a sort of second coming of Christ. Godard objects to this intimation, insisting on cinema as a missed event, as "something that was invented and not used," out of ignorance or unwillingness, but he asserts that the image is intrinsically peaceable and does not have the destructive capacity of language. For Godard, since "in the

beginning was the text," its interpretative essence alone compels us to erect sacrosanct significance to dogmas for which we are willing to kill.

Both Ishaghpour and Bersani grapple with theory's temptation to conceive of art as a medium capable of redeeming the experience of the catastrophes of the world. Ishaghpour's essay "Jean-Luc Godard cinéaste de la vie moderne: Le politique dans l'historique" traces the shifts in the relationship between the historical and the timeless in Baudelaire's text *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*. In Baudelaire's study the dimension of historicity is introduced, its awareness brought on by the technological and epistemological changes of the nineteenth century which thrust the conception of art into the moment of the present. Beauty was no longer conceived as absolute and sought to be captured in its eternal essence; rather, the idea of the beautiful was shifted onto an idea of the poetic, of art, and of the aesthetic in the irreducible novelty of its moment. With the consciousness of time as an absolute of thought permeating the parameters elaborated by the Romantic philosophers and poets, the poetic has increasingly faced the difficulty imposed by modernity's inclination to focus on the present, a constraint gravely stifling poetic production whose condition is the reflexiveness, limits, and fragmentary forms of the historical. The conception of time as condition of thought was solidified with the French Revolution, with Kant, and with the 1848 Revolution, and the result was that "le temps a détruit non seulement le sens univoque et éternel de la beauté, mais il a lié le poétique et l'histoire ensemble, tout en les opposant radicalement."[52]

Modern awareness of history and its horrors and ruthlessness presents a difficulty in resisting the invitation to convert its effects into moralizing doctrine, or

to redeem its reality through the metamorphosis into timelessness. Since the cinematic image cannot 'produce' a presence in a world already determined by images, Godard's cinema is not interested in the present as History but in the "in-between," the breach between current reality and the infinite determinants, real and virtual, that constitute the present. Thus, says Ishaghpour, "Il s'agit de l'actuel dans ce qu'il a encore de virtuel et d'intempestif, qui ne peut se révéler qu'à partir de ses lignes de fuite et ses limites, et que seul le poétique peut le manifester en le créant."[53]

For Bersani, the object of studying our culture of redemption is to challenge the assumption that art, in its recapturing of reality, can repair the loss and wreckage incurred by the brutality of experience. "The catastrophes of history matter much less if they are somehow compensated for in art, and art itself gets reduced to a kind of superior patching function, is enslaved to those very materials to which it presumably imparts value."[54] Bersani sees the origin of attributing a corrective power to art in its conflation with philosophy, producing an aesthetic consciousness which negates a faltering and erring world, itself blind to the condition of art as ontologically inhabiting the world. A work of art cannot achieve the ideal state of being its own philosophical critique.[55] Bersani studies literary works whose aesthetic of redemption works to redefine the redeeming quality of art; his theoretical conjecture reinvests the vocabulary of redemption with the questioning of "authoritative selfhood." This formulation leads him to probe the embroiled relation between cultural authority and identity.

Bersani bases his criticism on the role of memory in the enhanced dependence of art on death. Death enables a penetration of the lost (dead) other into the work

which he defines as a possession that is always a form of self-possession. In his work on Proust, Bersani attributes to involuntary memory the revival of an experience of the self that has lived it (as in Marcel's memory of his grandmother); this memory inscribes the subject in a present from which he or she is absent, and thus produces a radically separated self. The authority of literary repetition through the laws of memory resurrects or saves experience as a justifiable object of writing. "Experience [or desire] destroys; art restores."[56] If Bersani's reading of Proust is critical of incorporative remomeration which allows the narrator to reconstruct his objects as truths, he also sees in the tension between the repeated narration of events in the early and late parts of the novel – the re-narration – a possibility of rethinking the relation between art and experience.

Bersani pursues the theoretization of repetition in its relation to sublimation and adduces the Kleinian and Freudian conceptions of sublimation as culturally symbolized activities practiced by the ego. A proper discussion of his elaboration of the reparative quality of sublimation as a symbolic reminder of that which terrifies and threatens rather than liberation from the violence of experience is beyond the scope of this chapter. But his theory of sublimation can illuminate the potential externalizing identification of art (cinema) to create productive distanciation. For Bersani, art need not erase or repress the anxiety of desire for this anxiety will remerge as a morally recycled if redeemed cultural expression. Rather, art can highlight the specificity of the experiential object as inherently shattered, failed, and by replicating it comprehend experience as sustained by an uncommunicable jouissance:

> The inadequately expressed and inadequately satisfied desire to renew the ébranlement of the sexual thus repeats itself by turning against itself: self-shattering is turned into rageful aggressiveness, and the excited dismantling of identity is degraded into the longing for a merely biological death.[57]

Bataille's novel *Le Bleu du ciel*, says Bersani, offers an example of fictional scenarios situated in repetitive relation to a historical event (Nazism) in which the illusion of insulation from culpability is breached from our complicity in historical horror. Bersani argues that the repetitive appearance of the trope of solarity in the novel, particularly that of the exaltation of solar violence, does not connote sympathy with Nazism but implies rather the inevitability of "shared essences," affinities, and continuities "in which the terms are so disproportionate as to make imperative a movement of self-rejection. Nazism is the monstrously inaccurate replication of the solarity that Troppmann [the narrator] nearly worships; it is a repetition of Dirty [his lover] in which Dirty gets lost, in which she can only fail to find herself."[58]

It is the irony in the protagonist's discovery of the blackness he saw in the very moment of experience of mad exhilaration that had caused him to recoil and separate himself from the ecstasy of violence. This distanciation from an intrinsic fascination with the terror in its totalitarian manifestation is the political resistance to redemptive art that Bersani sees in Bataille's novel: this is the art that does not provide us with an intelligible and authoritative reason for the repetition in history, but propels us to re-view our own representations of truth's aura in art.

Clearly both Ishaghpour and Bersani are attuned to modernity's compulsion to define discontinuities between the present and the past, and to its reliance on the

perceived eminence of the past, along with the inevitable need to mourn its loss. Cultural mourning is facilitated by promoting existing models of symbolization – religious, epistemological, aesthetic. Godard's images and assertions lend themselves to the critique of cultural redemption. However, I will argue that history's entrance into Godard's film is not an occasion for aesthetic (or religious) reparation, but is rather a high resolution enactment of the relation of ethics and choice to the historical present.

**Mozart in Sarajevo**

*Notre musique* is Godard's 2004 'return' to Sarajevo for his first journey to the embattled city was an imaginary scenario in the 1996 *For Ever Mozart*. *For Ever Mozart* was constructed in the form of sonata with the first and last movements shorter than the middle. Unemployment in the theatre constitutes the introductory section; the main part recounts two efforts of filmic production: a young group of unemployed actors traveling to Sarajevo in the hope of staging a play (Alfred de Musset's comedy, *On ne badine pas avec l'amour*) in the besieged city,[59] and a French director compelled by the producer to direct a film of the scope and pretension of a Hollywood production. The young idealistic couple encounters the (Serbian) 'enemy,' is taken hostage and dies at their hands, the super-production is rejected by audiences in favor of an American movie, an 'original.' The film's final sequence takes place in a concert hall; we hear a voice-over of a dialogue comparing Mozart and Wagner in which one person comments that he prefers Wagner and that there are "too many notes" in Mozart. "That's what people think," responds another, and the

pianist, clad in period attire, plays a piano concerto, until the piano sounds fade and a grating, discordant cello accompanies the tired collapse of the disillusioned director on the staircase, outside the hall. The last shot is of the piano score.

Invited in 2003 to Sarajevo by his friend Francis Bueb, director of the French Cultural Center in the city and organizer of the yearly conference "Rencontres européennes du livre," Godard (re)visits Sarajevo in which he feels at home, in other words exiled.[60] Such is the Godardian image: in a workshop on cinema, the director quotes to the assembled students a verse from Racine's *Phèdre* concerning the advantage of closing eyes over seeing. Racine's text serves to question the treatment of the relation between what the eyes see and what they do not see, and Racine's privileging of the invisible to the visible. However, it is cinema which demonstrates the unseen – Godard's address to the students is structured as a lesson of the opposition between fiction and documentary. He presents two photographs to the students: in 1948 the Jews ("Israelites" in Godard's words) walked from the water toward the Holy Land; in the second, Palestinians walk in the water toward drowning. Shot, reverse shot of two photographs depicting the facts. The Jewish people becomes the stuff of fiction; the Palestinian, of documentary. Godard associates Israel with the imaginary, with what can only be seen as certain – plot, narrative. Palestine represents what can only be seen as tentative – consisting of documented footage, an attempt to capture what does not yet have a narrative, uncertain, not real. For the political is the real, and cinema is political when it accomplishes the blurring of these categories. Thus falls apart this image: what was familiar to the spectator, assimilated at that instant into his imaginary and the comfort of its encompassing womb, collapses into

quotations in a process of alienation or displacement. Godard's move here is thoroughly Brechtian: he destabilizes all imagery, uprooting it from its imaginary status. Moreover, this scene is immediately preceded by photographs of corpses in concentration camps, Jews named "musulmans" by the Nazis.[61]

When asked about the film's title, Godard answered that the original project concerned visiting certain musicians and that "[t]he idea of music remained. Then it disappeared until we went to Sarajevo and it was as if the tramways were making us hear a certain kind of music, so I called it *Notre musique*: theirs, ours, everybody's […] one could say 'our philosophy', 'our life', but 'our music' […] has a different effect and then there is also the question of what aspect of our music was destroyed at Sarajevo? And what remains of our music that was there?"[62] *For Ever Mozart* confronts genocide and its place in the consciousness of Western spectators of cinema and brings to the fore European culture as it stretches between its summits, Mozart, for example, and its nadirs – Auschwitz, for example.

Our music is also the musical polyphony of the participants in the workshop who assembled in the Sarajevan Babel with all their linguistic hues: Hebrew and Arabic, Spanish and Serbian, French and Russian. Naturally, their faces do not reveal their ethnic origin to the camera and we cannot know who is Bosnian, therefore Muslim, Serb (Christian Orthodox) or catholic Croat.

*Notre musique*, which for Western culture is for ever Mozart, repeats therefore the structure of a musical creation in the purest form of the Western tradition; it also is built around three movements, but its pieces are steeped even more profoundly in the inaugurative imaginary of our culture. The film is displayed in a triptych whose

enclosing short panels depict the Kingdoms of Hell and Paradise, and in their midst persists the kingdom of Purgatory. Godard modifies the Dantean linearity but preserves the conceptual *Via Dolorosa* of man's moral traverse in the world. "Hell" lasts eight minutes and is paved with distilled montages of footage of the horrors of war and genocide, carnage of native populations, of Jews, and of neighboring peoples, all seen solely through the lens of cinema and documentary archives.

Purgatory follows and brings the filmmaker with it to the city recovering from the ravages of its war. The invitation to hold a workshop on cinema provided Godard with the occasion to execute the testament of the idealistic unemployed actors of *For Ever Mozart*. This replication differs from the reparative mode art has adopted whereby, according to Bersani, it re-presents terror in order to appease and hebetate experience and redeem us – spectators/readers but also perpetrators – from complicity or accountability. Here art repeats by enacting the will of the artists (of *For Ever Mozart*) through an assemblage of actors whose identity is either unknown or sustained in a continuous tension with the *contrechamp* of historical experience: justice cannot be delineated in decisive lines, conflicts are not resolved through a philosophical criticism conjured up by art. Godard's film never releases the spectator from the burden of identification: the place in which one makes – or sees – a film is not the place in which blood was shed. "Here," that is, on the screen and in the auditorium, is opposed to "Elsewhere," the place of the killing. The spectator is shown, is made to see, not the reels of slaughtered bodies in 'real time' from which he or she can only recoil in disbelief and walled off alienation preserving a terrified selfhood. Rather, it is the unintelligibility of the moral chain of violence that we see,

as well as Godard's incessant interrogation of spectatorship and its context, even in the dialectical relations – between the exhilaration from beauty to the sobering up, and toward the next phase of exhilaration-sobering in which the cinematic structure of truth is implicated.

**The (Non)Critique of the Dialectic of Redemption**

Saad Chakali has written a discerning study of Godard's dialectical criticism which, according to Chakali's reading, in distancing itself from such prescribed philosophical categories as nominalism, materialism, historicism and spiritualism has surpassed a 'rigid' internationalism to attain a cosmopolitanism that could stand in for paradise.[63] Chakali's reading of the film is a tribute to the boundless associations, determinatives, and contingencies interwoven in the registers of being in Godard's film(s). His analysis traces the inevitable invisibility of the coordinates of authoritative narrative which Godard pulls together in his montages: in poetry and architecture, in philosophy and colonialism, in literature and war, in languages and religion, and forever cinema – each visual and verbal fragment in the film referring to the constitution of History. In *Notre musique* these supplements converge within post-war Sarajevo, its streets, tramways, and the destroyed Mostar, its ancient bridge whose stones are retrieved from the water of the green Neretva in a meticulous reconstructive effort. Chakali's essay is a study of quotes, shots, titles of books, philosophical concepts, landscapes, and perspectives, a dizzying genealogical uncovering that seeks surgically to unveil Godard's metaphysical aesthetics. But it is precisely this meticulous forage in intellectual abundance that runs the risk of

presenting the final object of analysis as consisting of a list of skills, fastened together by redemptive rhetoric: Godard emerges the resurrector of associations but lacks an ethical vision of his own.

Olga, a student participating in the workshop, is a French Jew of Russian descent and the niece of Ramos Garcia, the Egyptian Jew who serves as Godard's interpreter.[64] Olga leaves Sarajevo for Jerusalem, after giving Godard before his departure a copy of her own DVD called *Notre musique*, having chosen to commit suicide (and inviting the spectators to join her) in a Jerusalem cinema house because, as she tells her uncle Garcia, "La liberté sera totale quand il sera indifférent de vivre ou de mourir." To Garcia's objection of the ample occurrence in history of death and suicide she says, "oui, mais toujours pour d'autres raisons. Toujours avec terreur. Jamais pour tuer la terreur." Yes, she loves life, but "La vie est une chose, la mort en est une autre. La vie existe, la mort n'existe pas." She dies at the hands of Israeli soldiers who discovered nothing but books in her bag.

In an extraordinary shot we see Olga in Sarajevo from a far point in the frame, a blurry image approaching slowly up to a close up, then leaving, her back now turned to the spectator-camera, saying, "C'est comme une image qui viendrait de loin." Chakali recalls Benjamin's analysis of the aura as the "unique phenomenon of a distance however close it may be" and thus endows Olga with the aura that defines the dialectic in Godard's work:

> Balançant entre le flou et le net, le loin et le près, le lumineux et le nébuleux, Jean-Luc Godard veut tenir ce pont fragile reliant ces couples antagonistes dont les termes sont inséparables les uns des autres, à l'instar du plus essentiel

> d'entre eux peut-être, celui qui tient dialectiquement, ensemble et opposés l'un l'autre, le positif et le négatif.[65]

Unsurprisingly, we are not told, either by Godard or Chakali, whether the other young woman in the film, Judith Lerner, the French Israeli journalist who came to Sarajevo to interview Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian poet invited to the conference and who appears in the film as himself, is the positive or negative element in this doubling. The interview, held in Hebrew and Arabic, reiterates questions from an interview Darwish held with Helit Yeshurun for the Israeli review *Hadarim* in 1996.[66] Judith Lerner does not believe that *Ha'aretz* will publish her interview, but she is insistent on meeting him in Sarajevo, "parce que la Palestine. Parce que j'habite Tel Aviv. Je souhaite voir un endroit où la réconciliation semble possible." She says these words to the French ambassador who is the rescuer of her grandparents in World War II, and in whose arms Judith's mother was born. Judith is the chronicler, who records the interview, who photographs schoolchildren hearing the history of the old bridge, the Mostar, from their teacher. Since *Ha'aretz* will not give permission to print this, she can enlist her grandmother's rich friend to ensure the diffusion of this simple conversation ("juste une conversation") between friends: "a dialogue no one has, not even in their heart, because the heart is alone."

Not withstanding the (fictional) assumption that *Ha'aretz* does not print such material (it does), Judith remains a figure of positiveness, perhaps exemplifying the image of the activists who advocate dialogue or "a simple conversation about psychology, ethics, nothing else" – these are perceived as naïve, disingenuous, mostly deluded, by both Left and Right. In response to Judith's questions about the

acknowledgement of the Israelis' connection to the land, Darwish speaks of the irony in his people's predicament: their tribulation is well-known because Israel is "at the center of interest of the world"; it also marks the futility of the struggle in light of Israel's formidable allies. "We are your propaganda ministry," counters Judith. But Darwish also explains his desire to sing the poetry of Troy, now that (our) culture knows all about its ruination, owing to Homer's epic, who told the story of the (Greek) annihilating side. This tension sustains the entire film: not only does Godard open a space for the renunciation of the Homeric poet in favor of the Trojan poet, but he makes visible the knowledge that the real is the uncertain (Troy that is no more), while the imaginary is what is perceived as infallible (Athens and Homer, and fiction films, and Hollywood).[67]

Chakali introduces his essay by highlighting *Notre musique*'s appearance after *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as the continuous drawing from the resources in Godard's possession "afin de ne pas cesser de continuer à voir dans le réel qui souffre et qui palpite les tremblants moyens de sa propre rédemption." In a footnote Chakali refers to the conception of redemption by German Jewish thinkers, mostly Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, and Franz Rosenzweig, with a quote by the latter designating redemption as a "rupture violente du tissue historique, l'irruption au cœur du temps d'une altérité absolue."[68] Redemption, Chakali seems to say, if partial and incomplete, is surely interminable in the case of decimated native Americans, exterminated Jews, expelled Palestinians, etc. But in his essay it is still spoken of in terms of a prayer sung and played by well-known musicians, or of the choice of Sarajevo as purgatorial space "où Sarajevo est la cité, élue par le cinéaste comme le cinéaste a été élu par elle."

If Judith Lerner, the woman who bears the name of her identity and comes to purgatory to learn, is determined to find logic in the senseless misery of the conflict, to engage in a conversation, simple or not (the phrase “juste une conversation” is repeated and stressed), to follow a working plan – in what sense is Olga ‘the positive’ of her (Judith) ‘negative’? For we are approaching Paradise, the third kingdom of the divine triptych, knowing, with Godard, who receives the word in his Swiss garden, among the glaring saturation of the colorful flowers which overtake the entire frame, that Olga’s suicide has been accomplished. (The message arrives via phone, from her uncle.) Olga’s suicide takes place elsewhere; outside the field of the camera, she is the charged side of the doubling. She is also the face, the obverse, of the couple since she is the one to (re)appear in the last kingdom of Paradise.

When she does refind herself, Olga is in paradise: a spring woods, near an ethereal lake (Lake Geneva), and we spectators find ourselves longing for the landscape, for the young men and women in swimsuits playing volleyball. We long for Olga, the Russian Jew from Israel, who left Sarajevo to die in Jerusalem because death, let us recall her words, is more akin to peace than to life. Olga wonders in this Garden of Eden after having been shot by an Israeli soldier, but in order to enter the garden she needs a permit from an American Marine, whose unit is stationed to guard this kingdom.

This scene embodies most acutely the dialectical strand in Godard’s political aesthetics which Chakali locates as its very essence – beauty and violence:

> Et ce pont est chez le cinéaste le plan dont l’extrême tension n’existe que par et dans cette exigence dialectique qui sauve l’immédiateté de la beauté

> première des choses du monde visible afin de ne pas la sacrifier à la *médiateté* que le plan godardien réclame malgré tout pour ne pas se suffire *totalitairement* à lui-même.

Indeed between the cinematic shot that produces the desire for the filmed reality, and our desire for this reality, intervenes political truth, which the camera cannot capture but can only wrestle with. But Godard's real does not emerge through a representation of a dialectic of positivities or contradictions such as the totalitarianism of which Chakali speaks, but rather through the dismantling power of the dialectic. Beauty is inevitably associated with Olga's suicide, whose act enabled the experience of its paradisiacal manifestation. (It is left to us to interpret suicide as a legitimate determinate in a dialectics defined by redemption.) But Chakali chooses to adhere to Godard's own dialectical relation with the American real, on which he insists by conferring the signifier United States on all parts of speech – *étasunien*.[69]

That America, culturally and militarily, is wrought with totalitarianism is a familiar stance in Godard. In *Notre musique* the Edenic dialectic between beauty and violence is inexorably captured in Chakali's adaptation; it is a paradise

> où l'on mime la joie de vivre […] paradis gardé par les Marines comme le veut le refrain de leur hymne militaire (l'image est littérale, et sa littéralité insiste sur une insolence que le grand âge du cinéaste ne lui a donc pas fait perdre, ainsi que sur un impérialisme culturel étasunien qui domine aussi nos lieux communs hérités d'un vieux fonds judéo-chrétien face auquel le cinéaste oppose l'immanente beauté des choses réelles du monde vivant)

Even if the Judeo-Christian funds sustain non-American Western culture as well, it is,

according to Chakali's reading of the film, the American terrorizing imperialism alone which dominates the paradisic haven of Lake Geneva, constituting the image of "United-Statesian" culture in its coincidence with the language of terror.

In *Eloge de l'amour* (2001) Godard provides the most elaborate theorizing of the predestination of American imperialism in all its incarnations (which he reiterates in several of his interviews): the French actress objects to the American producer who comes to sign a contract for the film rights of a former resistance fighter's story. This representative is in fact sent by Washington, which he clarifies, is the metonymy for the skipper whose ship Hollywood follows. Godard's objection to the signifier *American*, is justified by the (regrettable) rationale that Americans have no history, unlike Europeans, whose search for origins, stories, legends has a bountiful spring of space and time, that is, History – inside themselves. The inhabitants of this country (U.S.), says Godard, do not even have a name that is connected to the land, which traumatizes them into imperialist appropriation of all orders.

"An interesting complaint," says Richard Comb in his review of the film, "coming from cinema's preeminent jackdaw."[70] Comb concludes that religious (and nationalistic) themes are more at play in Godard's imaginary than is perceived. Comb is inclined, rather, to find the need to invoke themes of redemption and resurrection in the trope of light, traced back to (even redeemed by) the Lumières. Light is the agent of reflection whose movements Godard masterfully projects back through his montage to generate the excorporative identification: "linking, though not uniting, a star with an individual subjectivity."[71]

This is not, however, the phenomenon of Bernadette's vision as explained by

Godard to his students. Bernadette could not identify the revealed image she saw with the Madonna as portrayed by Raphael or Murillo, but she could recognize it in the Virgin of Cambrai – an icon.[72] "Pas de movement. Pas de profondeur. Aucune illusion. Le sacré." For Godard, then, the sacred is less arbitrarily identified, or divided up by reality, if its image obeys different perspectival laws and a different dialectic of depth and surface; but is its enigmatic aura better understood? Chakali identifies this aura with the sacrosanct as incarnated in Godardian dialectical ethics:

> *Notre musique*, s'il est une cathédrale de voix, de paroles, de langues, est également une mosaïque de visages produisant cinématographiquement le "*Tu-ne-tueras-point*" qui donc devient un commandement du cinéaste, un commandement godardien, après qu'il ait été mosaïque et levinasien, théologique et philosophique, toujours actuel, toujours prophétique.

This discourse of the sacral in Godard's film connects his fundamental theory of shot-reverse shot (crystallized in his statement in *Eloge de l'amour*: "Quand je vois un plan, je pense à un autre plan") to an aesthetic whose revelatory insight is disturbingly grounded in an epistemology of redemptive authority. Chakali's dialectical reading performs an interpretative gesture which validates the postulation of art as a reparative repetition even as he endeavors to shatter assumptions of identity as authority: "le cinéaste oblige ainsi son spectateur à la vision quand la vue se révèle fragmentaire, limitée: il l'oblige à l'être voyant comme Bernadette Soubirous l'a été décisivement une fois."

Indeed Chakali redeems Godard's didactic example of seeing as recognition: the image identified by Bernadette is an image whose depth is entirely guaranteed

through an incorporative model of identification which precludes distanciation from the object, and in which the image is assimilated into preordained symbolic narrative. Determinations of history – including its critique – in terms of the sacred and of authenticity (national, memorative, legal) are masterfully illuminated in the broken discontinuities and stark superimpositions in Godard's work. A reading such as Chakali's, with all its reweaving of the referential threads in Godard's intellectual and aesthetic tapestry, succeeds in delineating the dynamic of reflexivity, but leaves this film wanting in the final vision that it offers us. As we shall now see, *Notre musique*'s structure defies the assumption that polyphony or polyglotism are either founded in cathedrals, or constitute prophecy.

**History as an Ethical Triptych**

In defending Godard from the critique of avoidance and refusal of a position toward his objects, things and people, Jonathan Dronsfield argues that the present is indeed absent from Godard's films, but "not to the extent that it cannot be put into question by them, and not such that something like the present moment cannot in turn be put to his films or disclose in them a question."[73] Dronsfield conceives the ethics of Godard's films as inhering in the very removal or displacement of the present, if the present is synchronous with "the givenness of the world." Godard represents the present as a "temporality of the now" through a cinema which creates a space in time, the very temporal gap whose appearance becomes possible. Its possibility reflects to us our own agency: the necessity and grounds for making a decision and a choice in the world. In extending and spatializing the present, it is constituted as the limits of

the “before and after,” an ethical interval confronting the viewer with an experience from which he is not entirely removed and to which he cannot be wholly exempt from responding: “In having demanded of us a decision as to what is presented on screen, the viewer is being asked to endure a duration that cannot be grasped or fixed, the radical temporality of things.”[74]

Dronsfield writes that the cinematic illusion of being in time grants the spectator a vision of what time is capable of – but it necessitates an act of violence against the cinematic medium. Such violence reifies its materiality when it induces cinema to “renounce its claim over time by […] introducing an interval which displaces its present moment.”

Precisely such violence is committed to the linear givenness of time in *Notre musique*: the divine order is perturbed: hell – spatialized as a Kingdom, as are all the temporalities in the film – is the ‘before’ limit of the present, and paradise is its ‘after.’

The effect of the temporal violence, however, is not limited to the act itself; in fact, if it were, it would not demand from the viewer what Silverman posited as the temporal proximity that prevents full rejection of alterity. How does the Kingdom of purgatory in *Notre musique* produce the temporal gap that is not of the familiar now, and from whose horrifying effects the spectator cannot be absolved?

In *Eloge de l’amour* (2001) Godard rethinks his own view of the centrality of history and the utility of according history the powerful weight it had in his lifelong reflection. The main character, Edgar, is a director who cannot finish the film he is trying to advance because he cannot forget an actress he had met two years earlier

and whom he (still) wants to cast in the film. Godard's statement is materialized through the color scheme he chooses for the film: the first half, the present, is black and white – signifying melancholia and memory, while the second part – the past, is filmed in vivid (digital video) colors of vitality and authenticity. Douglas Morey points out that on the personal level of the characters' stories as well as the national level of the historical implications of France in twentieth-century tragedies, the investment in the past can be a burden that stultifies production of any kind. As Morrey writes: "If anything, the characters of *Eloge de l'amour* have *too much* memory."[75]

But the probing of memory that Godard stages through the obstacles Edgar encounters in executing his project, and which precisely sustain his film in the state of "projet," suspended in paralyzing leaps between past and present – attains an aesthetic particularity in its distinction of the ethical dimension of time. Edgar is beset by the difficulty of fashioning his project according to what he perceives as its very possibility: the three ages of humans – childhood, adulthood, and old age. What he discovers through his frustrated quests for the actress, and for historical memory, is the elusiveness of the present:

> Les jeunes, c'est évident. On les croise dans la rue et on dit d'abord: ce sont des jeunes. Les vieux, pareil. Avant quoi que ce soit, on se dit en pensée: voilà un vieux.
>
> Mais un adulte, c'est ce qui n'est jamais évident. Ils ne sont jamais nus. Il leur faut une histoire. Même dans les films X… Il faut les trois âges… Ou alors le projet doit s'arrêter. Ça devient une histoire avec Julia Roberts. Hollywood.

Pas de l'Histoire.

"Un adulte, ça n'existe pas" – the Resistance, says an old member, had its youth and old age but never its 'adult time.' If adults do not exist, notes Morrey, "it is because, paradoxically, they are too bound up with the movement of history." Whereas adults need to be defined by all the designators of identity and belonging – profession, family, nationality, etc. – to be a legible subject of a statement, the label child or old person suffices to insert persons of youth and old age into discourse. Edgar claims that the decision whether or not to have a past depends on how one sees him- or herself: one either has projects to advance and thus rejects the past or one's plans reject time and engender a strong solidarity with the past. Old people refuse time so as not to waste it. But both perceptions involve a clinging to the conviction that we are unchanging.

Things take on meaning, Godard says in *Eloge*, when the Story ends and History begins: "L'imparfait fabrique une image présente"; and then the problem is profaned by its own solution. The long panel depicting the Kingdom of purgatory in *Notre musique* is Godard's essay – in all senses of the term – to arrest the movement of history in its elision of adulthood. Edgar's last words in *Eloge de l'amour* express a wish to embark on another project "Raconter quelque chose de l'histoire," but he specifies his next *projet* as work on a cantata. *Notre musique* opens a vast space for the temporal now, perhaps equating purgatory with adulthood, perhaps asking what adulthood implies. Adulthood must contain the entire musical heritage bequeathed by our cultural history; it does not obligate us to renounce the achievements without which the inexhaustible richness of work – Godard's among others – could not be

conceptualized (nor retrieved by such analyses as Chakali's). But adulthood should also reflect on the burden of history – and History as burden, in its decisions and actions. While it is Olga, the embracer of suicide, who enters paradise and not her 'double' Judith, the idealist who believes in conversation, it is not clear that her self-inflicted death redeems the injustices of the oppressor – Israel, perhaps as metonymy of the West – in an act of historical intervention.

In his reflection on the notion of redemption, Bersani is aware of the contradictory effect that the concept of individuation holds for Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The tragic myth, through the admonishing of the chorus, punishes transgression of boundaries (by Oedipus) and at the same time sustains the pledge that the Dionysian will be reborn, or that individuation as the fall from oneness, from Being – will find its end. Bersani sees this redemption as "describing a movement between the physical and the metaphysical, and the difficult notion of an ontological redemption will be intelligible only if we rigorously banish not only the category of subjective selfhood but also that of art as symbolic or exemplary."[76] In Greek tragedy Nietzsche reads not a symbolic illustration of metaphysical reality; instead its heroes illustrate the unsubstantial figuration of a hero within the boundaries of his figuration. What these heroes represent is the "affinities of consciousness with realities" and with what exceeds reality. Being can never be figured in art, and that is precisely what art exhibits: the dissolution of the figuration by the artistic figure itself. Nietzsche's "primal unity" is an attribute of the intuitive knowledge – "mobile fusion" – of the irreducibility of consciousness to particularized identities: "The Dionysian saves us from the redemptive illusion of the individual; it cancels out, and redeems, Apollo's

crime of cutting into being, of defiguring it with figures, with lines and forms."[77]

*Notre musique* plays with boundaries as it shatters clear distinctions between the figures of the 'idealistic' Judith and the 'tragic' Olga who repeats, walking through the Kingdom of paradise: "A côté d'elle, c'est moi. Elle, je n'ai jamais vu. Moi je me reconnais. C'est, comme, une image. Mais qui viendrait de loin." How can the film be said to guarantee redemption through the figure of a Paradise policed though it is with (American) marines controlling its borders? This paradise is bounded even in its books, one of which, read by a young man, is David Goodis' *Sans espoir de retour* (*Street of No Return*, 1954). Even if adulthood is coeval with purgatory, it carries a designator; it is thus neither utterly dark, nor obliviously repressed, nor disgracefully wasted, nor blindly exalted. It defigures us by preventing both complacent, redemptive, assimilatory identification, and the demarcation of the other as alien – the terrorist, the deluded, the self-victimizer, the martyr.

Godard asks in *Ici et ailleurs* how to ask questions differently: how to find a job, make a living. His answer: "Etre employé par le temps des autres. Et à son tour, l'employer."

Adulthood is named, purgatory desacralized, its aura is the temporality of the making of decision within history; the now to which we always hope to return, even from paradise.

## Notes to Chapter 3

[1] *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*, David Sterritt, ed. (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1998), p. 176.
[2] David Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 19.
[3] Douglas Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 223-24.
[4] *Seeing the Invisible*, p. 27.
[5] *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, II*, 1984-1998, A. Bergala, ed. (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1998), p. 336.
[6] *Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 224.
[7] Jacques Rancière, "La Sainte et l'héritière: A propos *des Histoire(s) du cinéma*, *Cahiers du cinéma*,"537 (1998), pp. 58-61; *La Fable cinématographique* (Paris: Seuil, 2001), pp. 230-31.
[8] Colin MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at 70* (Bloomsbury: London, 2003), p. 243.
[9] Maurice Blanchot, *L'Amitié* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), pp. 50-51. A compelling example of this dialectic between the image and nothingness is offered by Leo Bersani, in his analysis of George Segal's sculpture *Abraham's Farewell to Ishmael*. Bersani focuses on the image of Sarah, who, clad in a deathlike hood, watches the scene of separation between father and son (and the son's mother Hagar), positioned behind a stone wall and thus almost absent from the heartrending scene. But in her very remoteness, says Bersani, Sarah dominates the event through "the wholly unengaging absent presence of a divinely sanctioned fatality." From the perspective of "the authorized narrative of history" all the details of Abraham's relation to Hagar and their son Ishmael, the stories of desire, kinship, mourning or biological constraints are but "footnotes" in the destiny which will grant the authorized lineage and the appropriation engendered by Sarah and her own union with Abraham. Sarah tolerates the emotional display between Abraham and Ishmael (with Hagar standing close) because she knows that not only is this bond marginal, but that her own existence, along with her husband and her son Isaac, is transient. But this transience bears the promise of a providential parentage: "Only death can have that kind of patience and indifference, and once death (almost imperceptibly) enters the scene, we really see nothing but its ignored presence, and we can no longer read anything but the grand historical narrative that only our dying makes possible." *The Culture of Redemption* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), p. 205.
[10] *Jean-Luc Godard*, pp. 65, 108.
[11] Youssef Ishaghpour, *Archéologie du cinema et mémoire du siècle* (Paris: Editions Farrago, 2000), p. 84.
[12] *Archéologie du cinema*, p. 21.
[13] Pierre Nora, *Les Lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).
[14] Henry Rousso, *Le Syndrome de Vichy* (Paris: Seuil, 1990); Eric Conan and Henry Rousso, *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas* (Paris: Fayard, 1994).
[15] Peter Carrier, *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures: France and Germany since 1989* (New York: Berghahn, 2005), p. 189. Peter Carrier argues that the symbolic value of the monument derives its designation as site from public communication and mass media rather than from an inherent quality of tradition and legacy.
[16] *Archéologie du cinema*, p. 67.
[17] *Archéologie du cinema*, p. 66.
[18] *Archéologie du cinema*, p. 66.
[19] *Archéologie du cinema*, p. 24.

[20] Claude Lanzmann, "Hier ist kein warum,"in *Au sujet de Shoah: le film de Claude Lanzmann*, Michel Deguy, ed. (Paris: Belin, 1990), p. 279.
[21] Dominic LaCapra's critique of *Shoah* sees in Lanzmann's granting sole legitimacy to the witness "the most pronounced manifestation of a displaced secular religiosity" in that the witness is also probed into a re-living "of the traumatic suffering of the past – a status with which Lanzmann as filmmaker would like to identify." "Lanzmann's *Shoah*," in *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 100-01. LaCapra's argument ascribes to Lanzmann's absolutist approach a pathological disposition, which seeks the witnesses' reconstruction of the event as compensation for his own incapacity to work through the trauma of the Holocaust: "This full identification would not only allow one to act out trauma vicariously in the self as surrogate victim but cause one to insist on having the victim relive traumatizing events, thus concealing one's own intrusiveness in asking questions that prod the victim to the point of breakdown," p. 111.
[22] Clément Chéroux, ed. (Paris: Marval, 2001). The photographs are of naked women grouped before being led into the gas chamber and of *Sonderkommando* burning bodies removed from the gas chambers.
[23] Gérard Wajcman, "De la croyance photographique," *Les Temps Modernes*, 56:613 (March-May 2001), p. 41.
[24] Goerges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout* (Paris: Minuit, 2003).
[25] "De la croyance photographique," p. 125.
[26] *Images malgré tout*, p. 172. The reference here is to the inherent potential to negate the function of the camps when what appears on the screen is its modern attire: a green field, as we see in Lanzmann's contemporary footage outside the boundaries of Auschwitz.
[27] *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, II*, p. 430 .
[28] *Images malgré tout*, p. 178.
[29] Didi-Huberman draws from his study of Benjamin's plan for the *Arcades Project*. The Paris Arcades and the material abundance with which it replenished itself were regarded by Benjamin as representing a philosophical truth about the historical consciousness of capitalism. While dialectical logic accounts for injecting purpose and sense constructed from images of a meaningful past into the present to sustain a narrative of historical development, the assembled artifacts enables the materialist historian to recover the historical appearances, permitting the dialectical image to burgeon into existence. "Benjamin was [...] convinced of one thing: what was needed was a visual, not a linear logic. The concepts were to be imagistically constructed, according to the cognitive principles of montage. Nineteenth-century objects were to be made visible as the origin of the present, at the same time that every assumption of progress was to be scrupulously rejected"; "such images were the concrete, ''small, particular moments'' in which the 'total historical event' was to be discovered, the perceptible ur-phenomenon [*Urphänomen*] in which the origins of the present could be found." Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1991), pp. 218, 71.
[30] Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), p. 5. The possibility for "ontologically doubled being" here refers to Godard's *Hélas pour moi*, in which the character Rachel may have had a sexual encounter with God: Rachel, upon parting from her husband (Gérard Depardieu), is displaced a few times within the same frame. Bersani and Dutoit write that Godard proposes "a static yet sequential version (presence-absence, here-there) of ontologically doubled being […] a being at once empirical and metaphysical […] at once realized […] and potentialized."
[31] *Forms of Being*, p. 5.
[32] Jean-Luc Godard, "Je reviens en arrière mais je vais de l'avant," *Télérama* (May 2001), 2679, p. 57.

[33] Jean-Luc Godard, *I, a Man of the Image* [Interview with Jean-Luc Godard]. *Sight & Sound*, 15:6 (June 2005), pp. 28-30.
[34] Alain Bergala, "Helas pour moi ou du présent comme passé légèrement corrigé," *Cinémathèque*, 5 (Spring 1994), pp. 25-26. Let us recall that Rachel, Lavan's youngest daughter, was promised to Jacob on condition that he work for seven years to earn her. Jacob abided, only to discover at the wedding night that he had been duped into wedding her older, veiled sister, Leah. Jacob proceeded to work another seven years for Rachel. Jacob worked for a wife who was double; Rachel's love was to be shared with her sister. They were husband and wife but heir love was consummated with difficulty and with God's intervention.
[35] *Forms of Being*, p. 9.
[36] *Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 113. Morrey refers here to Serge Daney's article "Le Thérrorisé (pédagogie godardienne)," *Cahiers du cinéma*, (1976), p. 38.
[37] *Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 114.
[38] *Forms of Being*, p. 9.
[39] Isolation, for Brecht, is prescribed also between actor role, music and spectacle, and each scene in the piece.
[40] Kaja Silverman, "Political Ecstasy," *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 84.
[41] *The Threshold of the Visible World*, p. 85.
[42] *The Threshold of the Visible World*, p. 87.
[43] *The Threshold of the Visible World*, p. 85.
[44] Ibid., p. 93. Silverman draws on the Lacanian designation of this subjective position as "a whole affective assumption of one's neighbor." See Chapter 4 below for further discussion of this conception in Lacan and Freud.
[45] Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1968), p. 188.
[46] *The Threshold of the Visible world*, p. 101.
[47] Silverman devotes a considerable part of her reading to discussing the status of aura in terms of 'illumination' both in Benjamin and Lacan (pp. 95-97).
[48] *The Threshold of the Visible World*, p. 103.
[49] *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, II*, p. 444.
[50] *Archéologie du cinema et mémoire du siècle*, pp. 35-36.
[51] *Archéologie du cinema et mémoire du siècle*, p. 76.
[52] *Archéologie du cinema et mémoire du siècle*, p. 96.
[53] *Archéologie du cinema et mémoire du siècle*, p. 111.
[54] *The Culture of Redemption*, p. 1.
[55] This argument is the basis for Bersani's reading of the Proustian novel, which ran the risk of degrading itself to being a mere supplement of philosophy, a vivid illustrator of laws. The 'failure' of *A la recherché du temps perdu* to become a pure discourse of truth constitutes the subject of one of Bersani's analyses in the book.
[56] *The Culture of Redemption*, p. 14.
[57] *The Culture of Redemption*, p. 45.
[58] *The Culture of Redemption*, p. 121.
[59] The idea was borrowed from a newspaper article by Philippe Sollers during the Bosnian war.
[60] The idea of exile as home is a topos of post-modernism, and not specifically attributable to Godard.
[61] This rapprochement seems to continue the critical methodology that shows the shot-countershot components of the image and illuminates the narrative constructing it. The countershot to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its attending narrative distortion is

thus highlighted (and justified?) by the tragedy suffered by the Jews in the twentieth century (and perpetrated by Europeans). However, in this case there is no voice-over to note this, and the viewer is left to make the associations at his or her own discretion (and acquaintance with history).

[62] Micael Witt, "The Godard Interview: I, a Man of the Image," *Sight & Sound*, 6 (June 2005), http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/313/. The musicians in question were associated with Manfred Eicher's ECM Records.

[63] Saad Chakali, "Notre Musique/Jean-Luc Godard," *Remue.net*, Automne 2005, http://remue.net/spip.php?article957.

[64] Early in the film Godard interviews Ramos who left Egypt for Israel, now living in France and working as interpreter in French, Hebrew, Russian, Portuguese, Spanish, Arabic. "Like Henri Curiel?" asks Godard. Curiel was an Egyptian-Jewish anti-colonialist and communist activist, who worked to build bridges between Israel and Palestinian officials after moving to France, and was killed by the French Secret Service.

[65] Chakali notes Godard's rephrasing Kafka: "Le positif nous ayant été donné à notre naissance, il ne nous reste plus qu'à faire le negatif." Quoted in *Eloge de l'amour* but not in *Notre musique*.

[66] I will note that Mahmoud Darwish died on 9 August, 2008, at the time I was reading his interviews. Godard does not give credit to Yeshurun for the interview, a big part of which is re-cited in the film. She is also the translator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* into Hebrew.

[67] Like living shadows three Amerindians intervene at this point in the film, intermittently wearing everyday clothing or their authentic gear, citing lines that tell of their extermination. Godard is intent in turning over every stone on the path of Western ravages.

[68] Cited from Franz Rosenzweig, *L'Etoile de la rédemption* (Paris: Seuil, 1921), pp. 286-95.

[69] Well-know is Godard's disdain for the United States' nominal imperialism. Since *America* is a continental category, he insists on distinguishing between the United States and all other countries in the Americas with recourse to the adjective "étasunien."

[70] Richard Combs and Raymond Durgnad, "Chapter and Verse," *Filmcomment* (Jan.-Feb. 2005), pp. 35-36, 39, 42-43.

[71] "Chapter and Verse," p. 43.

[72] "The Virgin of Tenderness" was an icon of the Eleousa type, brought from Rome to Cambrai in 1440 by Canon Fursy de Bruille, an alleged original of St. Luke. "Although purported to have been an original from Saint Luke's hand, and therefore adored as an icon-relic, the Cambrai Madonna was – it is now thought – a Sienese or Florentine panel painted in a Byzantine style in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. The fact that the style of the Byzantine icon is unrelated to the time in which Saint Luke lived does not seem to have diminished its credibility; being old and "Eastern" sufficed to evoke a biblical past. As they reproduced the style and iconography of this original, the copies made ad similitudinem can be placed unambiguously in the first category of devotional image – the image with a well-established origin."
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0422/is_4_88/ai_n17093713/pg_7?tag=artBody;col1

[73] Jonathan Dronsfield, "'The Present Never Exists There': The Temporality of Decision in Godard's Later Film and Video Essays," in *The Cinema Alone*, p. 61. This essay counters remarks by Stanley Cavell, who sees in Godard's treatment of his characters a depersonalization and indifference which renders their intervention in the world inconsequential.

[74] *The Cinema Alone*, p. 62.

[75] *Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 231. Morrey refers to the influence of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* on Godard; this is his famous text on history's stunting and degenerative effect on life when it overtakes awareness. One might add that in his *Ethics*, Spinoza defines memory

as a function of ordinary consciousness and is "simply a certain interconnection of ideas which involve the nature of things which are outside the human body and which occurs in the mind in accordance with the order and interconnection of the affections of the human body." Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part Two, Proposition 18, Scholium, trans. G.H.R. Parkinson (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000). The "order and interconnection" are distinct from ideas according to reason and construe, with imagination, inadequate knowledge. "It is not in the free power of the mind either to recollect some thing or to forget it. So this alone is believed to be in the power of the mind: namely that we can, by a free decree of the mind alone, either be silent about or speak of a thing which we recollect […] those people, who believe that they speak, or are silent, or do anything by a free decree of the mind, dream with their eyes open" (*Ethics*, Part Three, Proposition 2, Scholium). The treatment of the imagination as inadequate knowledge spurred much controversy among modern thinkers. The whole of the *Ethics* is a journey on the path to adequate knowledge as inherently dependent on a distinction in Time between *duration* and *eternity*.

[76] *The Culture of Redemption*, p. 93.

[77] *The Culture of Redemption*, p. 100.

## Chapter 4

## A Literary Escape from Universal Judgment: The Ethics of Lacan's *Kant avec Sade* in Villiers de l'Isle Adam's "Le Désir d'être un homme"

What is the fear that accompanies and dictates the discourse of philosophy from the Enlightenment and through modernity? Susan Nieman, in *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy,* inscribes modernity between two historical events which presented a fundamental challenge to philosophers: the Lisbon earthquake of 1755 and Auschwitz.[1] With the early Enlightenment, which Nieman's study identifies with the publication of Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique* in 1697, philosophy became aware of the fragmentation within the very call to which it had to answer: "The demand that the world be intelligible is a demand of practical and theoretical reason, the ground of thought that philosophy is called to provide."[2] The controversy among philosophers concerned the question of sources, namely, do ideas or experience constitute a theory of knowledge? In the eighteenth century, what philosophers began to fear was that the world might turn out to be the way it appears to us; this apprehension necessarily brought on the question of ethics.

Until the early Enlightenment the question of the grounding of thought in ethical or metaphysical foundations was undecidable and led to the determination that philosophy be centered, if not on a theodicy, then on epistemological inquiry. Nieman writes that the problem of the intelligibility of the world forms a link between ethics and metaphysics, and thus, rather than ground the problem of evil in theological or secular terms, she sets out to show that philosophical standpoints from the early

Enlightenment to the present are guided more by ethical than epistemological propositions.

Nieman traces a conceptual shift in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century philosophical responses to the problem of evil. In her exposition, it is not ethical principles that she finds lacking in the search to make the world intelligible; she seeks, rather, to understand the ethical paradigms we design to understand evil, in order, finally, to reveal changes in our understanding of ourselves. Recognizing an action as evil is terrifying in that it implies a loss of orientation brought about by structural changes in thought, a loss that a theory of knowledge will not account for: "[t]he worry that fueled debates about the difference between appearance and reality was *not* the fear that the world might not turn out to be the way it seems to us – but rather the fear that it would."[3] This conceptual shift occurred, she argues, in the early Enlightenment, when the imperative to distinguish between natural and moral evils emerged as the philosophical debate itself. Whether set in theological or secular propositions, the discourse of evil is radically intertwined with the efforts of reason to problematize categories of understanding and thus constitutes the "real roots of philosophical questioning."[4]

Nieman's aim is to deflect our reading of philosophical discourse from its foundation in a theory of knowledge, concerned with "skeptical epistemological quandaries" focusing on the difference between appearance and reality. Instead, she claims that the problem of evil constitutes a more inclusive organizing principle for understanding the history of philosophy and one, moreover, which is better suited to account for the historical change in the definition of morality and justice. For

Nieman, the crucial question is how the discourse of reason can still be allowed to bind the real and the rational.

In her exploration of the problem of evil, Nieman distinguishes between writers whose categories were based both on experience and on a fundamental universal order and those for whom reality stood for appearances only. Her analysis of the fragmentation of tradition in modern schools of thought tracks the ethical responses of writers and philosophers to the decreasing certainty about general ethical foundations but she makes the point that the particular instances of ethical criteria were not affected by this change.

My aim in this chapter is to carry forward the problematization of the question of evil, and follow the conceptual shift in literature and philosophy in the mode of interpreting evil through the lens of the psychoanalytic school of thought. Among the thinkers discussed in Nieman's study, Freud's impact on the corrosion of belief in providential power is underscored. Her analysis focuses on Freud's rejection of any redeeming potential in theodicy, culture, and even love, and his refusal to stand in as contemporary prophet. Although she credits Freud with deflecting responsibility for evil from the gods to the human being – and in so doing grounding the modern understanding of subjectivity and its development – Nieman concludes that Freudian thought seeks to ascribe all evil to nature. The price for this thought, she writes, is the banalization of evil: "Yet the urge to naturalize the world arose from the same process that issued in theology."[5]

Understandably, Nieman's discussion of Freudian psychoanalysis is limited in space and is presented as the study of the child as a model of man's fearful

disposition in the world and his endeavor to be consoled by religion or reason. Less persuasive, perhaps, is her attributing to Freud the urge to naturalize the world absolutely, while stating that such an absolute endeavor merely tames the world and blurs the category of evil: evil, when naturalized, becomes trivial and banal, and thus neutralizes the very need to confront it. It seems that Freud did not merely perform a fatalistic diagnosis of the prereflective child so as to abolish distinctions between different forms of evil: *Civilization and Its Discontents* – which Nieman quotes extensively – is an acutely distinct response to a discrete historical kind of evil.

It is not certain that, as Nieman holds, for Freud's followers any attempt to relate reason to nature is a "category mistake" and that if human subjects construe the world as unjust, it is due to a projection of childhood structures and expectations. The world may not be an entity that has to do with justice, but there is a vast distance between "naturalizing the world" so as to negotiate the understanding of natural disasters and attain some control over their effects, and attributing the designation 'evil' to natural phenomena, in order to neutralize the moral weight of human action which is part of nature. In fact, differentiating between the damage incurred through natural calamities over which we have the (very relative) control that even limited knowledge can procure, and understanding psychic motivation and its moral ramification (which is still gravely wanting) is the precise endeavor of psychoanalysis. For Freud and for some of his followers, notably Lacan, the purpose of studying the field of psychic disposition was not simply to author new "normative categories" that would either radically separate natural from moral evil or accord human beings with the same absolution from their misdeeds as was granted to the

naturalized gods. Quite the contrary, as I shall argue in this chapter; for psychoanalysis was never only theory, neither for Freud nor for his colleagues or apprentices. It was conceived as praxis, and as such the question of understanding the need to depend on fate was an essentially ethical one. The goal of psychoanalysis in fact echoes the one stated by Nieman in her introduction, namely "to use different responses to the problem of evil as a means of understanding who we have become in the three centuries that separate us from the early Enlightenment."[6] Not only does psychoanalysis seek to understand who we have become, but its effort consists in agitating the category of (internalized) responsibility in order to shift its understanding in terms of either guilt or indifference into the imperative to study motives and drives.

Indeed this is a difficult task because it compels the researcher (analyst as much as theoretician) to differentiate between natural and moral evil and at the same time to continue to maintain that psychic behavior is substantially determined by all the categories comprising nature. This means that in order to confront the problem of evil, psychoanalysis must design a model of behavior which would incorporate the registers of conscious and unconscious reactions to reality, the effects of ideologies and language on thought, and early human development. Moreover, and crucially, it must include its own critique in the theorizing process. This immanent critique is understood as the awareness that even though, as creatures of nature, human beings have the right to desire to concoct solutions helpful in fleeing the terror of the unknown and the threatening, they do not have the right *not* to capitalize on the knowledge they have gained. That reality is dismal does not absolve us from the

imperative to transform our responses to its terrifying complexities.

This shift in reaction to complexity has everything to do with ethics. It is also inextricably tied to the human subject's attempts to administer the complicating realities ushered in by the event that pitted Enlightenment ideals against the wrath of their execution: the French Revolution and its Terror. These pursuits are conjured up in nineteenth-century French literature, a century whose political and economic reality was constituted by cycles of successes and failures to (re)enact the conceptual and scientific innovations of Enlightenment philosophy. The literary genre of the fantastic in France, taking on themes of dismembered bodies, spectral apparitions, and unspeakable secrets from the past, was particularly challenged with the legacy of severed heads and dispossessed social stripes where, according to Joan Kessler, "[t]he intellectual climate for the emergence of the literary fantastic was prepared, in an important sense, by the Age of Reason, in which unquestioning acceptance of the supernatural had become both intellectually and aesthetically suspect."[7]

I will examine in this chapter a short story by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, "Le Désir d'être un homme," whose author chose the forename "Auguste," or "Philippe Auguste," insisting on attaching the title 'Comte' and implicating himself in a lawsuit against the writers of a melodrama allegedly defaming his ancestor the maréchal Jean de Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. He ultimately lost the case, but, as Pierre Reboul writes, "l'impression globale demeure juste: Villiers, dans sa misère, dorlote sa race, non pas, certes, sous la seule impulsion de quelque vanité, mais parce qu'*elle le constitue*, parce qu'elle nourrit son orgueil et son devoir."[8] The equivocal relation to the upheaval brought on by the revolution is manifested also in Villiers' fluctuation from

support of the Commune uprising in 1871 to an (unsuccessful) candidacy as monarchist representative for the municipal elections in the Parisian seventeenth arrondissement. Moreover, fantastic fiction incorporates realistic elements with fantasy and supernatural features (ghosts, demons, disembodied voices, etc.), that simultaneously sustain and unsettle interpretations based on positivistic science and idealism (or mysticism). In Villiers, Enlightenment, reason, and order are confronted with their phantom offspring: the terror bred by radical politics, the arrogance of science, and the bourgeois blindness and attachment to money propagated by materialistic philosophy.

In this tale the question of evil is pushed to the limit of reason's ability to account for the dynamics characterizing the intersection between motive, language and meaning, and desire – the components of subjectivity. Lacanian psychoanalysis, whose theoretical business is to navigate the junctures of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary, will command my analysis, based on Lacan's interpretation of Kant's categorical imperative in his essay "Kant avec Sade." Lacan's critique of this intersection between literature and philosophy is framed by the structure of perversion. This model provides forceful insights not only into the flux of elements which acts as substrate for the subject's moral decisions, but also into the ethical implications of 'using' a theoretical model: is the literary text used to illustrate a psychoanalytic position? Or does the literary text resist a reading framed by a prototypical theoretical scheme? The question of analysis becomes an ethical challenge when it is faced with the question of the privileged frame of reference.

I propose that the three textual frameworks of literature, philosophy, and

psychoanalysis read in this chapter be both credited for autonomous manifestation of the subject's (and subjectivity's) dilemmas and charged with the burden of answering to the call of reading: reading the pursuit of escape written into the desire for coherence.

I will consider the premises by which Lacanian psychoanalysis both affirms and questions the universality of Kant's philosophical model. As praxis, psychoanalysis insists on understanding subjectivity as a singularity that can effect a change by highlighting those intersections in thought where terror – as bound with desire – continually displaces ethical space. Lacan's essay "Kant with Sade" precisely stages an encounter between a (Kantian) 'philosophy of order' and a discourse of 'pleasure in evil' formulated by Sade. Its reading along with Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's short story will articulate the question of evil in its relation to the question of desire and its submission to will. This articulation, I will propose, is the Lacanian term for literature as a discourse which revolts against an epistemic insistence on an ethical postulation based on the primacy of the Good.

**Philosophy and Evil at the Juncture of Republican Vicissitudes**

Lacan tells us in his essay "Kant avec Sade," somewhat preposterously, that we should 'use' Sade to read Kant in order to discover what is subversive in Kant and that, moreover, Kant and Sade were the precursors and consequences of the Declaration of the Rights of Man bequeathed by the French Revolution. He also tells us that the articulation of Kant with Sade, an articulation which traverses the literature of the nineteenth century, provides the historical condition of possibility of

psychoanalysis itself. Lacan equates the Sadean bedroom with the schools of ancient Greek philosophy – Plato's *Academy,* Aristotle's *Lyceum*, the Stoics – which gave birth to doctrines of ethics. It is the rectification of ethics that labors at clearing the ground for science to take off. And in the case of psychoanalysis, Lacan says, "for Freud's path to be passable" something needs to happen – a clearing of the grounds "which will have to make its way through the depths of taste for a hundred years."[9] For Lacan, it is not exactly Freud's scientific precursors who paved the way and enabled psychoanalysis; it is rather a consent that came from the depths of people and from a fashioned consciousness. In the same way, says Lacan, psychoanalysis effected a change of taste in our century, a paradigmatic change in the discursive practice enacted through transference and for which nineteenth-century literature set the stage.

The question of taste brings us to Kant's *Critique of Judgment* and his analysis of taste, which, even more so than the beautiful, is not a category subject to a universalizable criterion. There are no rules to determine taste as a quality, and so the phrase "the depths of taste" implies that people need to desire it, that the object, or theory, or the new concept, be a cause of desire. The attribute of taste and the aesthetic – for Kant himself – is thus quite different from the category of the moral in that it cannot be inscribed in a universal rule of judgment. Freud was able to enunciate his pleasure principle in distinction from traditional ethics, that is, in distinction from the question of the supreme good, along with what Lacan calls "the psychology inscribed in various myths of goodwill," because nineteenth-century literature had worked the theme of "happiness in evil" into modernity's consciousness

(*KS*, 55).

Lacan thus draws a path from early ethical reflections on moderation and the good object towards the scientific approach, with the question of aesthetics and taste in the middle. Kant and Sade constitute a rectification of ethics, the deflection from the commandment to "love thy neighbor as yourself." Jacques-Alain Miller calls this modification of the commandment an ethical break that enabled the transformation of Sade's "happiness in evil" (*le bonheur dans le mal*) into Freud's "pleasure in pain."[10] Sade's formulation, says Miller, is "the literary precursor of the death drive" – the thought of the death drive needs a conception of the possibility of finding satisfaction in acts of aggression for the sake of aggression, even in self-mutilation, an understanding that was momentous in the postulation of the superego. Miller remarks that the literature of the eighteenth century constitutes a break in the traditional representation of evil as a circumstantial misrecognition. With Richardson's Lovelace and Laclos' Valmont and Merteuil we see the advent of a portrayal that insists on *jouissance* in evil.

Lacan and Miller remind us that for Kant and Sade these insights of the 'pursuit of evil' were contemporary with the French Revolution and its large-scale destruction. From the point of view of philosophy, if the Declaration of the Rights of Man has a truth value, it can also point to the truth of the freedom to desire in vain; what is the revolutionary Terror if not, indeed, the freedom to die? It was Blanchot who wrote that Robespierre and Saint-Just embody the Terror because they embody the freedom to inflict death on themselves.[11] The revolution, says Lacan (with more than a bit of disdain toward the American revolutionary pursuit of happiness, along

with its complacent ego-psychology), happened not in the introduction of the right to happiness; the pursuit of happiness has always been present in politics. With Saint-Just, however, happiness was declared a political matter in the decree that the satisfaction of the individual coincide with the satisfaction of all. But this revolution – in the Lacanian sense – willed that its struggle be for the freedom of desire. Inevitably, such ubiquitous freedom entails also the will that the law be free, so free that it can send your head into the basket (*KS* 71).[12]

Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* is seemingly one more guide for the initiation of a young girl into the erotic and moral codes of libertinage. Into the novel a pamphlet is inserted, with the verisimilitude of a political document, called *Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains* – a Sadean parody of an ideal republic and its limitations. Sade's revolutionary act – and this is Lacan's thesis in this essay – was to enunciate a universal maxim strangely fashioned after the model of Kant's celebrated categorical imperative: "I have the right of enjoyment over your body, anyone can say to me, and I will exercise this right, without any limit stopping me in the capriciousness of the exactions that I might have the taste to satiate" (*KS*, 58). This rule, which for Lacan is the rule for enjoyment or *jouissance* is a universal rule to which the will of all could be submitted.

This maxim's affinity with, or correspondence to, the Kantian categorical imperative is not subject to Lacanian irony. This is one of Kant's formulations: "Act as if the maxim of your action were to become through your will a universal law of nature." Far from reducing the Kantian moral law to a "morality in the bedroom," Lacan credits Kant with effecting the ethical break mentioned before through the

discovery that the essential dimension of ethics cannot be contingent on possibility, that is, it cannot be defined in terms of the possible such as moderation, renunciation, an equal distribution of the Good and of goods. Rather, the essential dimension of the ethical is concerned precisely with the impossible, with the dimension of desire, which is not concerned with what can or cannot be done, but only with the *excess* of what is possible, thus with what is excluded from traditional ethics.

Lacan points to the dimension that reveals the failure on Kant's part to justify this excess by quoting a famous passage from the *Critique of Practical Reason*:

> Suppose that someone says his lust is irresistible when the desired object and opportunity are present. Ask him whether he would not control his passions if, in front of the house where he has this opportunity, a gallows were erected on which he would be hanged immediately after gratifying his lust. We would not have to guess very long what his answer may be.[13]

Kant opposes this position concerning the power of desire to the ethical dilemma encountered by the same man if ordered by his sovereign to bear false witness against an innocent man under penalty of execution: we do not know whether he would overcome his love of life, but we can be sure, states Kant, that he would admit candidly that it is possible to give up one's life for a moral cause. This recognition of what is morally right and thus imperative is what constitutes freedom for Kant. Lacan intervenes in this scenario to propose that indeed Kant may expect problems from this pursuer of passion, "forcing him to recognize that no occasion will more certainly precipitate some men toward their end, than to see it offered as a challenge to, or even in contempt of, the gallows" (*KS*, 68). "For the gallows is not the Law": it is indeed

*desire* that is sufficient to prompt the subject to choose not to be a coward, to commit a senseless, purposeless act. In fact, writes Lacan, the true presence of the Law is the very absence of desire "because the law and repressed desire are one and the same thing." Slavoj Žižek comments that if one is willing to fulfill (sexual) desire by withholding the fundamental "egoistic" interest of perpetuating life itself, then this gratification is, in the strict sense, ethical.[14]

The ethical, in Lacan's essay, and with the help of the articulation between Kant and Sade, is stripped of the positive codes of legality. Lacan ties the question of legality with generality, allowing that, at best, legality could demonstrate a general possibility, but does not constitute universality, whose implausibility is perfectly embodied in Sadean humor: "Black humor at best, for any reasonable being, to be distributed between the maxim and the consent which it is presumed to have" (*KS*, 58). Universality is concerned with things as they are founded and as they can work out. But positive legality, says Lacan, can decide if a maxim can become universal rule "since this rank can eventually just as well oppose it to all positive legalities" (*KS*, 58). In this way, he opens up the most direct criticism of the Declaration of the Rights of Man: there can be no structural reciprocity between the legal and the universal. Structurally, says Lacan, reciprocity can be situated with great difficulty at "the logical time of any crossing over of the subject in his relation to the signifier," and still less as a relational paradigm in any stage of development (*KS*, 59). J.A. Miller gives a simple example to clarify this logic: There cannot be full reciprocity even between two brothers because of their age position and the relational hierarchy.

The very conjunction "Kant with Sade" which would imply reciprocity

between two bodies of work created by the authors thus serves as the marker that prevents such relation. Lacan does not seek to present Kant and Sade as participating in a mutual construction of an ethical doctrine. Lacan's analysis is focused on the disavowed morality inherent in either author – the limit of Sade's maxim of happiness in evil as well as the grounding of Kantian moral imperative in an empirical, 'pathological' motive. The conclusion to be drawn, however, is not that of a reciprocity across the veiled maxims, but rather the ethical dimension of desire itself, precisely in that it disavowedly corresponds to the Kantian criteria of "doing one's duty."

The Sadean maxim in all its irony serves as a paradigm of a statement which excludes reciprocity as such: "I have the right to enjoy you..." The maxim is a recognition of its own impossibility as a *reciprocal* universal rule in ethics, the ethics which for Kant is an unconditional practice of reason.

**Interpretations of a Moral Maxim**

Kant's moral law is based on two major premises. First, he rejects what he calls the "pathological," which is pathos, emotion, all sensory interest and empirical drives that give the subject pleasure, any concern for good, for passion, even compassion. The dimension of pain and pleasure disappears, or is liberated, as Lacan says. Second, Kant's law is a formal law; all content disappears and what is left is pure form, a formal criterion of morality. Miller's explanation of this gesture is concrete: in Kant's law there are no Ten Commandments, no circumcision, communion or praying towards Mecca, no respect for mother and father. Ethics for

him has nothing to do with health, taste, moderation or balance so crucial for the Greeks; in this way, it is a kind of terror – the world disappears. This brings us back to *the* Terror, Robespierre's Terror, and the emptying of the pathological – in the Kantian sense – from the General Will represented by the Republic. It becomes a bit clearer that if the criterion for Kant's law is universalizability, the law cannot always function. Miller asks us to consider the question of lying and he does not leave much room for hope when he says that we lie all the time, not because we are liars, but because we do not know the truth.

Lacan concretizes the problematic logic of the moral law with the figure of a moral filter. Kant's moral imperative relies on the logic of the pure concept; a moral question is made to pass an imaginary “black box” test of a certain logical consistency, a conceptual consistency – it either fulfils the imperative of the moral question or it does not and promptly self-destructs. The law is thus reduced to structure grounded at the logical, linguistic level. We must remember that Kant himself could doubt that there can be anyone in the ‘land of pure morality’, since while seeming truly moral, one might be there because one enjoys the activity prescribed as moral, and this incongruity brings us back to the pathological. Lacan proposes a synthetic logic of reason and morality: in this dynamic there would be an object which grounds logical consistency. This object is non-ontological: it is enjoyment or *jouissance*.[15]

For Kant the moral demands of duty are presented through the "fact of pure reason." It is the voice of conscience that appears to be the subject's own voice but is completely impersonal, since everyone hears the same voice, understands and

attributes the same meaning to its categorical imperative. That voice is, according to Miller, the auto-affection of the subject. It is the voice of conscience, which formulates the fundamental imperative, that commands the subject, but it is nevertheless inside the subject, in his core. The voice constitutes a form of the subject, the subject returns onto himself.

In formulating this logic, Kant reveals a truth even as he suppresses a fundamental element of it: the identity of this voice. In Miller's reading, the voice of duty is the voice of the drives themselves – of the sadistic superego who enunciates the maxim without truly being subjected to it. What Sade, with his paradoxical maxim, introduces to the paradigm (the Kantian voice of conscience), is the missing link in the form of evidence for founding his doctrine on the (perverse but 'republican') rights of man to enjoyment. He declares the foundation of his doctrine to be the truth that no man can be the property of another man – hence representing a veritable 'right of man' value. But the doctrine includes the concomitant stipulation that this right cannot be the pretext to suspend the right of all to enjoyment over any man – or woman. Sade formulates thus the ultimate statement of (non) reciprocity:

> [i]l n'est question, dans cet examen, que de ce qui convient à celui qui désire. Nous rétablirons la balance. Oui, nous la rétablirons, nous le devons sans doute; ces femmes que nous venons d'asservir si cruellement, nous devons incontestablement les dédommager [...] je veux que les lois leur permettent de se livrer à autant d'hommes que bon leur semblera; je veux que la jouissance de tous les sexes et de toutes les parties de leur corps leur soit permise comme aux hommes; et, sous la clause spéciale de se livrer de même à tous ceux qui

> le désireront, il faut qu'elles aient la liberté de jouir également de tous ceux qu'elles croiront dignes de les satisfaire.[16]

The difficulty to which Sade points lies, therefore, not in forcing the other to consent, that is, not in violence, but in the universal conception of reciprocity as ethics, on which Lacan comments in the following way: "And one would not want to miss this opportunity to denounce the exorbitance of the role which is conferred to the moment of reciprocity in structures, notably subjective ones, to which it is intrinsically repugnant" (*KS*, 58).

Kant's revolution consisted in disjoining the concept of knowledge from the concept of truth, which grounded ethical thought since antiquity. The voice of duty is purely formal for there is no system, even ethical, that can symbolize it and give it meaning. Where the ethical is signified for Kant is in the introduction of will in the first formulation of the categorical imperative: "Act as though the maxim of your action were to become, through your will, a universal law of nature."[17] In Kant's reflection, the relation between morality and action is possible only through of the will, but which – at the ethical level – is necessarily mediated, or enabled, by reason:

> Everything in nature works according to laws. Only a rational being has a *will* – which is the ability to act according to *the thought of* laws, i.e. to act on principles. To derive actions from law you need reason, so that's what *will* is – practical reason. When reason is irresistible in its influence on the will, the actions that a rational being recognizes as objectively necessary are also subjectively necessary; i.e. the will is an ability to choose *only* what reason recognizes, independently as preferences, as practically necessary, i.e. as

good.[18]

The law is written into nature, it is an objective principle and inherent to action as such. When rationality appears, it does not displace the law but engenders a new 'natural' phenomenon. It extends the domain of law into "principle" which is the "thought of the law," and thereby constitutes reason as the categorical determinant of the ethical will, of the willing subject to act ethically or not.

"Nature in the most general sense" is for Kant nothing but the effects of law as universal, and this adequacy enables him to legislate the formulation of the categorical imperative that bounds duty with reason: duty is a law for the human will only and precisely because he is a rational being. It constitutes a form that would be resistant to contamination by considerations of the contingent and the empirical (the pathological) such as pleasure and happiness. Reason would insure that duty be "meritorious" and that it will pursue only non-contradictory universal maxims. The congruence between the philosophical moral edict of Kant and Sade, says David Martyn, lies in their conviction that philosophy can reduce all content – nature, virtue, evil, desire, beauty – to a system of purely formal perspectival categories of reason (for Kant) and desire (Sade).[19]

**The Maxim in its Articulation of Fantasy and Perversion**

Let us repeat Sade's maxim while listening carefully to the formulation fashioned by Lacan: "'I have the right to enjoy your body,' anyone can say to me, 'and I will exercise that right without any limit to the capriciousness of the exactions I may wish to satiate'" (*KS* 58). It is Sade who pronounces, states the maxim, but his discourse situates the Other as the one who enunciates the right to enjoyment. The

discourse of Sade himself is the one of the statement "anyone can say to me"; the Other is the one who is free to do with me – Sade – as he pleases. Lacan finds that Sade's dictum, by pronouncing the moral law from the mouth of the Other, is more honest than the Kantian appeal to the voice within, since it reveals the splitting of the subject: into the fundamental subject of enunciation and the subject of the statement. It is not the first I of Sade's formulation that is the subject of the statement, because this *I* is in quotation marks: 'I have the right to enjoy your body' – these quotes are revealed only retroactively.

In making the Other *pronounce* his desire, his *right* to desire of me and over me, Sade introduces a discourse of the right to enjoyment, and thus poses the question of the freedom of the Other, the freedom of the Other to a jouissance that can be evil to the subject: *le bonheur dans le mal*. This is a precise inversion of the Kantian Good, which alone justifies a law, or a right; but it is also a necessary historical category in that it is enunciated in the very spirit of an ideal which the politics of revolutionary France in Sade's time was declaring to be the supreme Good. Article 4 of the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man states the following:

> La liberté consiste à pouvoir faire tout ce qui ne nuit pas à autrui: ainsi, l'exercice des droits naturels de chaque homme n'a de bornes que celles qui assurent aux autres membres de la société la jouissance de ces mêmes droits. Ces bornes ne peuvent être déterminées que par la loi.

The declaration, formally consistent with Kant's imperative, presents the ontological lacuna within the universality of a maxim in its articulation between law, right, and jouissance, when, let us recall, in French the verb *jouir* also means an enjoyment of

one's property, the right of possession.[20]

Sade's intervention, says Lacan, unmasks the fact that the splitting of the subject, the relation of the subject to the Other, is on the level of speech: on the one hand, the subject I as the subject of enunciation, the one who speaks the words "anyone can say to me"; and on the other hand, the Other as the subject of the statement "I have the right…" who is free to do with me as he desires. What this splitting reveals is the essence of the failure of Kant's universal maxim, for it precludes reciprocity, on which universal law must be founded as pure formal logic excluding all objects and affects. We see, then, that not only has Sade's perverse discourse unmasked a vanishing mediator or a blind spot, in Kant's moral law, but it has also exposed its own ethical value.

How, then, does perversion function within the dialectic of subjectivity in its structural relation to the Other inherent to the moral maxim? The Sadean maxim in its humorous blackness demonstrates that reciprocity – in the sense of being granted the same right – is not universally possible for two subjects at the same time. "Whatever it may be, it is already a point in favor of our maxim that it can serve as a paradigm of a statement that excludes reciprocity (reciprocity and not trading places)" (*KS*, 59). The Other as the exterior voice, the voice of the law as perverse – the Other as desiring evil – emerges from this maxim and instantiates the relation which divides the position into that of subject and object.

In the Lacanian interpretation the maxim represents the structure of perversion within the split subject, artificially divided by the two terms of the maxim. In this division, writes Alexandre Stevens, the enunciating subject ("anyone can say to me")

is placed on the side of the relationship to the Other.[21] The subject who states his right to enjoyment is the perverse subject. In this structure, therefore, the divided subject who is on the side of the Other is also on the side of what is thought of as the victim who is subjectified, while the perverse subject is on the side of the object: it is the perverse side that is objectified. The statement "I have the right" implies the participation of the body as object, which Kant "sends off into the unthinkability of the Thing-in-itself" in order that the will have exclusive right to the law of morality" (*KS*, 60). In the Sadean experience, conversely, the object returns from inaccessibility, disclosed as the "*dasein* of the agent of torment." Jouissance is petrified in Sadean fantasy, "it becomes the black fetish" in the structure of perversion, in which the executor is reduced to being the instrument of the fantasy, even if, as a "being of flesh and, to the bones," he is subjugated to it as a "serf of pleasure" (*KS*, 61). The perverse act is the rape of the modesty of the Other, who thus becomes anguished and divided, what Lacan refers to as the barred subject (who is also the neurotic subject).

**Subjectivity and the Structure of Perversion**

The structure of fantasy is essential to the ethical understanding that Lacan seeks to elaborate since it distinguishes between the neurotic (normal) fantasy and the perverse organization of fantasy. The object of the Sadean fantasy is the obtainment of jouissance, and in this it differs fundamentally from the fantasies which we often perceive as organizers of our world – sexual, political, charitable etc. The very essence of the Sadean fantasy is the procurement of jouissance, and as such it marks

the paradigmatic function of perversion in his maxim. What Sade wants, says Lacan, is to obtain the pain of the Other, to obtain jouissance by inflicting pain on the Other. "Pain is, thus, in the Sadean experience, a moment of jouissance of the Other's body," an experience whose limit is the death of the Other.[22] The sadist's jouissance is conditioned on the production of pain in the victim, and the production itself carries out the subjectification of the victim. Vicente Palomera's analysis of the Lacanian schemas of fantasy articulates the emergence of subjectivity in the victim as the assumption of the pain which functions as the object satisfying the tormentor and granting him jouissance. The will of the tormentor – the subject of the fantasy – is to 'pass the bar' of pain to the victim by proposing himself as the instrument which by causing pain produces division and thus subjectifies the victim.

What Lacan stresses here is that the pervert is the object of jouissance and does not constitute the subject in the perverse relation to the other. The tormentor produces the experience of the lack in the victim which is the very definition of subjectification. In this conceptualization the pervert serves the function of the superego whose task is to produce anxiety in the subject. Indeed the Sadean protagonists experience no anxiety, anguish or misgiving: the place of the object, comments Palomera, stands for a piece of the real and is thus not subject to determination or alteration by the law in its embodiment in the signifier. The subject of perversion is figured as object and pure will to jouissance; as such it is located beyond the Kantian pathological which is bound with the symbolic and with meaning. In this sense the subject of perversion is the ontologically pathological object which precedes the emergence of the (Lacanian) subject of lack.

The Sadean fantasy, then, is determined by the will to transform its subject – the tormentor, the pervert – into an object whose jouissance is answered in the production of pain and anxiety in the victim. The pervert rejects anxiety, rejects lack, and rejects the oscillation which epitomizes the deferral or displacement of jouissance inherent to the divided subject of lack. Indeed Lacan substantiates his interpretation by drawing on the ethics of the Stoics who relate to pain as a contemptible experience: "Imagine a revival of Epictetus in Sadean experience: 'See, you broke it,' he said, pointing to his leg. Lowering jouissance to the destitution of such an effect where its pursuit stumbles, isn't this to turn it into disgust?" (*KS*, 60). The Stoic treats his own pain with contempt and thus rejects its subjectification. In the same way, in order to sustain its jouissance the subject of perversion depends of the production of pain in its victim – the Other of anxiety (who experiences anxiety).

The analysis Lacan offers gains more importance still in its elimination of the difference between sadism and masochism. Masochism does not manifest a reversion of sadism, neither as difference nor as correlation; the masochist remains the master of the interaction in so far as he maintains himself as the "eternal object" for whom jouissance is attained through the passing of anxiety to the Other. Masochism involves a fantasy of an abject victim but the structure of the relation is analogous to the sadistic function: the tormentor, through the production of anxiety in the partner, is the instrument of pleasure.[23]

The fantasy, at its limit, is a static system, so tediously demonstrated by Sade in the monotonous and repetitive maneuvers which the tormentor compels the victim to undergo. Moreover, the victims, says Lacan, are themselves but an endless series

of young women for whom no depth of character is developed and whose only redeeming and even relevant attribute in the stories is their beauty. The character of the victim is reduced to an idea – a signifier – with no access to jouissance. The Sadean tormentor, by contrast, possesses a more extensive range of character and is allotted a broad stage within the novel to deliver his philosophical creed. Thus in *Philosophie dans le boudoir* the seven dialogues which comprise the body of the play feature predominantly the discourses of the three protagonists-tormentors (Madame de Saint-Ange, her brother and lover Le Chevalier, and Dolmancé, the 'Sadean philosopher'), while the victim, Eugénie, is a one-dimensional albeit beautiful young girl:

> One will see that there is a statics of the fantasy, by which the point of aphanisis, supposed in [the barred] S, should be definitely recessed in the imagination. Whence the hardly believable survival that Sade grants the victims of the trials and tribulations which he inflicts upon them in his fable. The moment of their death seems to be motivated only by the need to replace them in a combinatory, which alone requires their multiplicity. Unique (Justine), or multiple, the victim has the monotony of the relation of the subject to the signifier, in which, to trust our graph, she consists. Being the *objet a* of the fantasy, situating itself in the real, the troupe of tormentors (see Juliette) can have more variety (*KS*, 63).

In his seminar *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* Lacan discusses the function of beauty in terms of a veil masking the terror of the real: "a barrier so extreme as to forbid access to a fundamental horror" (*KS*, 63). The analysis of Antigone's resistance

to Creon's decree embodies for Lacan the ethical position as such precisely because it demonstrates the truth of the inextricable relation between the real and the symbolic: Antigone's beauty is ethical in that it relentlessly unveils the truth of the subject of the signifier as bound to death. Her death alone resists the obliteration of the symbolic recognition of her rebel brother and undermines his absolute death with no commemoration.[24]

Lacan points out the dissonance in Sade's philosophy: on the one hand his ranting against any hypocritical religious notion of consequences – good or evil – in an afterlife, and on the other, the tormentors' desire to impose such pain on their victims as to persist through eternity. In the compressed figure of the beautiful victim Sade is arrested from writing the subject of signifier, which would point to the terrifying beyond of death; the victim as subject is pure universalized function.

The mechanism which drives perversion is not only essential to the comprehension of the pathological, the dysfunctional or the origin of vice. Perversion as ethics founds Lacanian psychoanalysis inasmuch as psychoanalysis may be conceived as an attempt to problematize an articulation between the legitimacy of unconscious drives and their effects on reason's endeavor to be accountable for these very effects. In other words – Lacan's own – the challenge of an ethics of perversion is to understand "the order of fantasy inasmuch as it supports the utopia of desire" (*KS*, 63).

The importance of this ethical conception lies in the blatant division within the subject enacted in the perverse moral imperative. Fantasy introduces an identity in which absolute nonreciprocity is the foundation; this relation, says Lacan, is

coextensive with the formations of the subject: it articulates a pleasure for which an instrument – *objet a* – has been substituted. This (Sadean) experience "is only obtained inasmuch as its apparent agent congeals in the rigidity of the object, in the aim that his subjective division be entirely sent back to him from the Other" (*KS*, 62).

The apparent agent or tormentor, comments Palomera, is congealed, rigidified within the position of the object; thus the division comes from the Other and the perverse agent rejects his own division and makes it appear in the locus of the Other. Lacan suggests that Kant's rejection of the pathological, a rejection of the object in the separation between a pure subject and affectivity, is necessarily sustained by a "hidden presence" of the object. This object is the tormentor, the superego which sustains the renunciation of pleasure, interest, affect, ideology, all of which comprises the edifice of the pathological. According to Lacan, comments Pierre-Gilles Guéguen, the object of jouissance is treated as an object of universal value in its rigidity, monotony, and irreplaceabilty. In placing this constant and "impure" object in the place of the cause of the moral imperative, Sade universalizes it, says Lacan, in a manner corresponding to Kant's universal dictum which has no particular object but universal and pure reason as cause.

**Jouissance and the Limit of the Moral Law**

In "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," Lacan says that "jouissance is forbidden to him who speaks as such, although it can only be said between the lines for whoever is subject of the Law, since the Law is grounded in this very prohibition."[25] The Law appears to ordain that the

subject enjoy – "*Jouis*!" while the subject can only reply "*J'ouis*" (I hear) since jouissance can only be understood and heard. For Lacan, however, the law designates the difference between pleasure – in the Freudian sense embodied by the dynamic of the pleasure principle – and jouissance. The crucial point is to understand the emergence of subjectivity as the generation of limits on jouissance, not by the Law but by pleasure:

> But it is not the Law itself that bars the subject's access to jouissance – rather it creates out of an almost natural barrier a barred subject. For it is pleasure that sets the limits on jouissance, pleasure as that which binds incoherent life together, until another, unchallengeable prohibition arises from the regulation that Freud discovered as the primary process and appropriate law of pleasure.[26]

In speaking of a "natural barrier" Lacan does not intend a form of pre-social law of nature; it is rather a passage, as Pierre Naveau comments, the formation or formalization of the law by the cultural being that is the human being.[27] There is a certain simultaneity between the fundamental ontological law of pleasure and the founding Law of interdiction emblematized by Lévi-Strauss as the prohibition of incest. Naveau proposes an antinomy between two laws: the Law of prohibition of jouissance, and the law of permission of pleasure. Pleasure functions as barrier or defense against jouissance and thus for Lacan constitutes a limit, indeed, an ethical limit: it is precisely because jouissance is conceptualized at an inaccessible point that the attempt of the Sadean tormentor to reach it renders him a pervert. Crossing over this boundary produces such pain as to necessitate executing it over the body of the

Other, of the partner or victim who will then be led to languish, or faint, for pain: "[h]owever prolonged one supposes it to be, it nevertheless has, like pleasure, its term: the fainting of the subject" (*KS*, 62). The aim of the pervert is to split the victim into a barred subject – barred from experiencing his own jouissance, but – crucially – pain for him is not a limit to jouissance.

On the contrary, jouissance, says Naveau, is linked to crime in the very prohibition which characterizes jouissance. It was Freud who listed in *Civilization and Its Discontents* the various endeavors by which man seeks to induce evil in its Other through exploitation, appropriation, humiliation, torture, and murder. Lacan sees the Freudian pleasure principle as the law prohibiting the beyond in which crimes of evil grant jouissance.[28]

In the *Philosophie dans le boudoir* the victim of the Sadean pervert lives albeit mutilated, scarred, and infected; the paradox of the fantasy, however, is the possibility of absolute barring of the subject which would lead to the death of the Other. Indeed, the only limit for the perfect sadist is a jouissance of the pure anxiety of the partner – her death.

Lacan opens his essay with an explicit historical contextualization of the condition of possibility triggering an ethical break in thought, specifically the thought of psychoanalysis. If Freud was able to offer a theory of morality which deviated from "various myths of goodwill" and took account of a psychic dynamics centered around the pleasure principle, "we can only credit this to the insinuating rise across the nineteenth century of the theme of 'happiness in evil'" (*KS*, 55).

J. A. Miller discusses Kant's own question in *Religion within the Limits of*

*Reason Alone* concerning the possibility of the existence of a pure will to radical evil, a will to evil for evil's sake, submitted to the formal disposition of the moral law.[29] Thus, in Book One of the work, entitled "Concerning the Indwelling of the Evil Principle with the Good, or, On the Radical Evil in Human Nature," Kant insists on the articulation between will as freedom and the law as maxim:

> In order, then, to call a man evil, it would have to be possible a priori to infer from several evil acts done with consciousness of their evil, or from one such act, an underlying evil maxim; and further, from this maxim to infer the presence in the agent of an underlying common ground, itself a maxim, of all particular morally-evil maxims. Lest difficulty at once be encountered in the expression nature, which, if it meant (as it usually does) the opposite of freedom as a basis of
>
> action, would flatly contradict the predicates morally good or evil, let it be noted that by "nature of man" we here intend only the subjective ground of the exercise (under objective moral laws) of man's freedom in general[30]

To propose that man is evil, says Kant, is to state that he is conscious of the moral law but has nevertheless chosen to adopt the corrupt maxim. But Kant proceeds to prove that although "[t]his evil is radical, because it corrupts the ground of all maxims; it is, moreover, as a natural propensity, inextirpable by human powers, since extirpation could occur only through good maxims, and cannot take place when the ultimate subjective ground of all maxims is postulated as corrupt" – reason can work in transforming the content of the maxim since man is a being whose actions are free.[31] Freedom – as moral freedom – consists in the restoration of the original

disposition to the Good through the establishment of pure law (i.e. the Good) as adequate to the ground of our maxims as such.[32]

**Desire and Evil in Nineteenth-Century Literature**

If Lacan had been remiss in referring to Kant's important inquiry into the origin of radical evil, he nevertheless located the quest to evaluate these very origins in the literature of the nineteenth century, following the clear adjacency of the publication of *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Philosophie dans le boudoir* (1795). Indeed, as both Miller and Žižek comment, the notion of "le bonheur dans le mal" evoked in the opening of Lacan's essay is rooted in the literature that traverses the nineteenth century. In dramatizing the relation between happiness and evil, nineteenth-century literature disclosed the complex and disturbing dynamic that constituted human action and paved the way to the conception of a scientific analysis of the psyche. Moreover, in the annotation to his translation of Lacan's essay, James Swenson notes that the most likely source of the locution "le bonheur dans le mal" is a short story by Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, "Le Bonheur dans le crime," from the collection of novellas *Les Diaboliques* published in 1874. Miller points out that contrary to traditional readings of the inception of psychoanalysis which credited renowned scientists with the effects on Freud's discovery, it is literature which has left the principal mark on its creator. Lacan attributes to the literature of Kant, Sade, Barbey d'Aurevilly, and Baudelaire the progressive (*cheminement*) taste for the theme of happiness in evil, an endeavor which unearthed the "myths of goodwill"

inherent to a tradition of the morality of the Good espoused by philosophy for two millennia.

The epistemological transformation – or shift in conceptual paradigm studied in Susan Nieman's work – which would enable Freud's course to be "passable" was conditioned on the people's taste, a change in the "profondeurs du goût," a modification in the consciousness which alone can answer to the challenge of an alternative interpretation to uncontested traditional morality. The agent of transformation is literature, an aesthetic articulation which effects a change in the discourse of the depths – of desire – and is logically founded in the ethical conception of reality carved out by Kant.

In terms of Freudian psychoanalysis, Miller reminds us that "happiness in evil" means taking pleasure in pain, and, as such, it is the precursor of the concept of the death drive within the realm of literature. The death drive involves the conception of the possibility of finding satisfaction in acts of aggression, including self-directed destruction. Eighteenth-century protagonists such as Valmont in *Les Liaisons dangereuses* and Lovelace in *Clarissa* voiced a possibility of finding jouissance in a systematic infliction of pain; these characters enabled writers of the following century to create works in which the discourse of happiness in evil is the cornerstone of a distinct and crucial literary genre.

Beyond the formal question of taste, as we have seen in the discussion of the literary fantastic, nineteenth-century France's compulsion to articulate the theme of happiness with evil derives from the need to ruminate not only on the terrifying weight of the historical beheading of the monarch, but also on the (ethical) knowledge

that the real is the rational: murderous acts were committed by the very champions of the ideals of equality and liberty. Even more – in revolutionary discourse terror and virtue were conflated and the rhetoric of progress was deployed to justify daily spectacles of the relation between justice and the guillotine. Even if Villiers' stories do not explicitly refer to the revolutionary Terror, the symbolic confrontation between the classics of morality (philosophy and aesthetics) and the reality of the self-destructive potential of the quest for absolute will and right is the very essence of a literature that signifies both nostalgia for and disenchantment with the past.

For Lacan the literary does not serve merely to exemplify the truth of fundamental concepts such as fantasy, jouissance, or symptom as famously claimed by Derrida. Jean-Michel Rabaté's work on Lacanian psychoanalysis and literature recognizes the critical views reproaching Lacan's aim in his readings of literature for framing the works within the theoretical propositions and reducing them to the status of a conjectural modeling.[33] Rather than exploit literature as a source of exemplary proof of the veracity of the theory, says Rabaté, Lacanian psychoanalysis sees literature as the very space in which linguistic effects reveals both discursive and experiential attributes. In his studies of Lacan's readings of Hamlet, Antigone, Sade, Duras, Claudel, and Joyce, Rabaté maintains that these texts "were able to teach him [Lacan] something about the dialectics of desire even more than they allowed him to teach this dialectics via parables to the audiences of his seminars."[34]

If Sade's convoluted fantasy offers grounding for his theoretical categories, Lacan's pursuit is always of the role desire plays in ethics and the understanding that desire gets its satisfaction with the production of meaning; it is always a desire for

recognition. One of Lacan's late readings was the seminar on Joyce in which he elaborated the conception of the symptom and its status in the ethics of interpretation as the inherent element in the human dimension. The symptom is a "wanting-to-say" which does not stop writing itself, and as such, says Miller, it is, "at the very least, an articulation of signifiers, possibly without any meaning. That is, as knowledge, a knowledge that doesn't stop being written."[35] Lacan's fascination by Joyce precipitates the reworking of some of his concepts in order to displace the focus of literary analysis from the barred subject of desire to jouissance of writing and to the domination of the Name-of-the-Father as *père-version*. To the concept of the Borromean knot – a way of interlocking three rings in a manner such that the taking out of one will cause the other two to fall apart – Lacan in his *Sinthome* seminar added the symptom as the fourth circle supporting the originary structure.[36] Lacan's work focused on Joyce's writing as jouissance in its connection with the real – Joyce as symptom of writing a hole, an enigma in reality through (seemingly psychotic) verbal experimentation. Rabaté expounds on Lacan's fascination with the act of naming, the puns and riddles in Joyce's writing whose intensity can only be bound with the jouissance in writing as naming. Indeed the thesis in *Le Sinthome* that Joyce, in his writing, remains locked in the figure of the father, even as the figure is disavowed, absent from the text (of *Ulysses*), encountered criticism and rejection among Joyce scholars. However, Lacan's insight was to transform the foreclosure or disavowal of the Name-of-the-Father into a fantasy of taking oneself as the redeemer, a fantasy he named *père-version*:

> The hypothesis of the Unconscious, Freud underlines it, can only hold if one

> supposes the Name-of-the-Father. To suppose the Name-of-the-Father, this is God. This is how, psychoanalysis, when it succeeds, proves that one can do without the Name of the Father under the condition that one uses it.[37]

Villiers' "Le Désir d'être un homme," to which we will turn now, offers a glance at this fantasy of taking oneself as the redeemer, a fantasy that forecloses its being conditioned on renunciation of desire.

**The Failure of Jouissance is the Failure of Pain**

The redeeming value of the enjoyment of the symptom is eerily questioned in a short story by Villiers de l'Isle Adam from the collection *Contes cruels* published in 1883. "Le Désir d'être un homme" opens on an October Sunday at midnight, under the curfew of the post-Franco-Prussian war in the Boulevard du Crime.[38] A tall enigmatic figure with a "physionomie saturnienne" stops before a narrow mirror next to a café and ponders his reflection. The character is identified as a famous actor of tragedies known under a series of appellations: "Esprit Chaudval, né Lepeinteur, dit Monanteuil, rejeton d'une très digne famille de pilotes malouins."[39] The spirit of Chaudval is signified in two names associated with the art of painting – perhaps after Jean-Jacques Monanteuil, a relatively little known nineteenth-century painter, although Lepeintre is also a name of a famous theatrical family.[40] The encounter with the abandoned mirror, livid and crystal cold in the emptying curfewed streets, reflects a strange image, aged and alienated from the glory of the stage and its renowned fellow inhabitants.

The mirror as object undergoes a transformation in its semantic representation; it is first narrow and tall, towards which Chaudval acknowledges (his

own reflection) with a bow of courtesy – the subject recognizes his image conformed to his perceived contours of a distinguished artist although the same mirror unmasks the fragmented nomination marking him. The recognition is moreover so totalizing as to induce in him a stupor. Then, “par une inadvertance étrange,” the only mirror to be left out of the general drawing and bolting of the café shutters is the one bearing Chaudval’s reflection (*CC,* 208). The mirror, which hitherto revealed a cherished and earned glory, now remains as abandoned and alienated as the protagonist himself. This mirror is now “livide et lunaire […] cristal cruel et sombre,” sending the subject into an hallucinatory state and dilating his pupils. The “glace providentielle” returns Chaudval’s fixated gaze through an enlarged version of objects “que les physiologistes ont constatée chez les individus frappés d'une émotion très intense.” The providential mirror fulfils the operation of the emerging (Lacanian) subjectivity by first confirming the integrity of Chaudval’s imaginary identification with the figure of uniqueness. It then reveals the helplessness of aging and the loss of mastery and precipitates the dissonance and aggressivity of the split subject.

The mirror is now the gaze itself, a deformed surface (re)producing memories and metamorphosing into surfaces textured like the sea and the night, both spaces of loneliness, loss, and anxiety. At this moment a light from a streetlamp is reflected in the “terrible glace,” a light that portends a terrible *naufrage* to come.

The subject of anxiety perceiving his image in the terrifying mirror has readied himself to accept the truth of the real, a reflection that shattered the celebrated image of an actor: “Bien, renonçons! dit-il simplement et à voix basse, comme le condamné à mort qui, subitement réveillé, dit au bourreau: ‘je suis à vous, mon ami’”

(*CC*, 210).[41] This renunciation has the appearance of the stoic ethics of regarding pain and death with disdain and so dismissing one's own subjectivity. According to Lacan, renunciation of enjoyment is itself a form of jouissance; it is a jouissance required by the superego, i.e. the jouissance of the moralizer or the prosecutor. As an imperative of the superego, jouissance is linked to the death drive because it has two limits: pain and pleasure.

Chaudval renounces public life in favor of retiring to a post of lighthouse keeper on a secluded Atlantic coast held in the past by his ancestors: "cette place de gardien de phare dont jouissaient mes pères." The legal meaning of *jouir* comes forth as a legacy from the fathers to renounce the pleasures of the world, but it is also a place that will enable him to show the light to ships, to *direct* their trajectory, thereby guarding the architectonics of a stage: "Un phare! Cela vous a toujours l'air d'un décor." A stage-set replaced by a phallic shaped director to be manipulated by the former artist, as well as an inherited shelter to experience a *père-version*.

Chaudval renounces the emptiness of the feigned existence of an actor whose life consists of a sequence of mimetic performances equaled to the string of designators he carries as names. The voice of renunciation comes from the exterior past even as the inutility of his old age is reflected from his mirror image in the present. Chaudval ventures on a monologue in which he associates the streetlight flicker in the mirror with the promised lighthouse. In this moment of denunciation (materialized by recalling the minister letter granting him management of the lighthouse) a voice – his own – sounds so false as to cause him to turn around and search its bearer: "une voix de fausset si brusque, si différente de la sienne qu'il en

regarda autour de lui, croyant à la presence d'un tiers" (*CC*, 211).

The voice of the superego arouses anxiety in Chaudval; following Lacan's reading, then, Chaudval is situated in the position of the subject at this moment precisely because he is barred by the anxiety of knowledge, the knowledge that jouissance has been until now obtained through the assumption of roles and representations of others. The imperative to *feel saved* by the procurement of the right to reside in the ancient lighthouse is so forceful as to necessarily originate form a third Other than himself.

"Soyons homme!" This command thrusts him into a state of tumultuous reflection. After years of representing, playing, shadowing the experiences of characters, Esprit Chaudval realizes that he has never experienced his own passion, never felt his own sentiment, never committed a real act. In order to enter Humanity, one needs to feel; Chaudval has the knowledge of the cause of subjectivity: he desires to be subject. It is reason itself which supports this desire, real sentiment is the *sine qua non* of the aspiration to the title of Man. Chaudval, however, resorts to the logic of reason because he ignores his own inclinations or because the symbolic arena of his lifelong profession has robbed him of his 'natural' tendencies, has deformed or perverted the real affect which determines the particular passions of the subject.

Chaudval, then, must *choose* a passion. Neither love, nor glory, nor ambition – all emotional pleas to jouissance prescribed by the social Other – will satisfy the imperative to feel. He had perhaps experienced these sentiments, either on stage or in life, and they clearly did not procure a suitable enjoyment to identify oneself a man. The perfect passion is remorse: "J'y suis, dit-il: LE REMORDS!... – voilà ce qui sied

à mon tempérament dramatique" (*CC*, 212). But the image reflected from the mirror reveals a deformed, convulsed, and horrified face: his dramatic temperament conjured up the specters of figures he has represented on stage – Nero, Macbeth, Orestes, Hamlet, Erostratus – all of whom are literary figures inspired by ghosts to commit acts of cruelty and destruction for which even remorse had not atoned. These are fictional characters whose enabling condition was the apparition of phantoms, and Chaudval understands that his redemption can come only from the vision of 'real' ghosts – his own.[42] In that understanding he is imitating art, for not only must the real of his passion be in accordance with the symbolic of the literary sentence: 'Remorse! There's a passion that suits my dramatic temperament,' but, according to Lacan, in the perverse structure there is a realization of the imaginary – the scenario: the stage images. Chaudval is contemplating a position whereby he is led to serve as an instrument to the jouissance of the Other, the remorse experienced by the formidable historico-fictional characters whom he himself has interpreted and perhaps with whom he had identified. The voice seems to be a third person who does not stop uttering the imperative *jouis*!, pushing him to be the perfect, universal object of feeling – enjoying. This voice is none other than the Lacanian superego.

It remains that remorse needs a cause, and Chaudval is "innocent comme l'agneau qui hésite à naître," a pure pathological subject before the emergence of the lack. The barred subject of lack and anxiety has to be produced, and that, says Lacan, is the operation of fantasy. For the perverse fantasy to function the will must be present, the will to pure jouissance, or Kant's will of pure reason. The law which justifies the choice of remorse as passion follows the Sadean justification of crime; it

is willed by nature, just as remorse is 'naturally suitable' to Chaudval's character.

> Ah! *qu'à cela ne tienne*! reprit-il: qui veut la fin veut les moyens!... J'ai bien le droit de devenir à tout prix ce que je *devrais* être. J'ai droit à l'Humanité ! Pour éprouver des remords, il faut avoir commis des crimes? Eh bien, va pour des crimes: qu'est-ce que cela fait, du moment que ce sera pour… pour le bon motif? (*CC*, 212).

Chaudval has the *right*. We are here again in the republican, post-Commune domain of the right: the Sadean citizen has the right to jouissance rewarded from anyone he desires; Villiers' subject, to belong to humanity, capitalized when qualified as a body that feels. This analogy suggests a correspondence between jouissance and remorse, the structure of which Lacan, as we have seen, labors to demonstrate.

As we recall, Lacan says that the maxim, or law, is emitted from within "the opacity of the transcendent" of a voice on the radio, of the monarch, of God, of Sade's being Supreme-in-Wickedness, or what psychoanalysis terms the voice of conscience (*KS*, 60-61). This voice is the will to jouissance that defines the perverse fantasy: "qui veut la fin veut les moyens!" The *volonté* to jouissance is a universal injunction and right decreed by the Other – "qui" – whose name – "le bon motif" – redeems and even demands a crime. In Kant the ethical action is defined by the will's consideration to follow the moral law; the law is the a priori condition of the decision whether or not to act. In Sade the moral law is reinstated as the right to jouissance stated by the Other who finds enjoyment in evil and whose will to jouissance has no repression.[43] In Villiers the will is related to the law through the right to humanity which is, for Chaudval, the right to the jouissance of remorse (and so, the right to

crime).

The 'I' in 'I have the right to Humanity!', according to the Lacanian schema, is the subject of the statement who proclaims the universal right to enjoyment. The narrator indicates that at this point Chaudval embarks on a *dialogue* concerning the crime to be enacted in the following manner:

> – Je vais en perpétrer d'affreux. – Quand? – Tout de suite. Ne remettons pas au lendemain! – Lesquels? – Un seul!... Mais grand! – mais extravagant d'atrocité! mais de nature à faire sortir de l'enfer toutes les Furies! – Et lequel? – Parbleu, le plus éclatant... Bravo! J'y suis! L'INCENDIE! Donc, je n'ai que le temps d'incendier! de boucler mes malles! De revenir, dûment blotti derrière la vitre de quelque fiacre, jouir de mon triomphe au milieu de la foule épouvantée! de bien recueillir les malédictions des mourants... (*CC*, 213).

Chaudval improvises his particularized division into the subject of the statement ("I will commit some dreadful crimes") who assumes his symbolic identity through the value of the statement, and the subject of enunciation ("When? What crimes?") situated in the Other who represents the beyond of the moral Law, from the point from which the enunciation comes, the impersonal point of support of the Other.

Undoubtedly Chaudval is aided by the place he occupies in the symbolic as an actor who is versed in changing roles as effortlessly as a chameleon. He thus bows in a self-granted gesture of admiration to his image in the mirror: "(Chaudval ici se redressa, improvisant ce vers d'allure absolument cornélienne:) 'Garanti du soupçon par la grandeur du crime!'"[44] Chaudval does not fear the police and will therefore

hide in the illuminated safety of his lighthouse (*phare*), for the police would never suspect a perpetrator of a "disinterested crime." Hence he is g*aranti du soupçon par la grandeur du crime*.

In fact Chaudval's reaction recalls Lacan's reading of *The Purloined Letter* by Poe, in which the letter functions as an empty signifier whose content is not known to its beholders and is not related to a fixed meaning but assumes the significance according to the position in which the subject finds himself in relation to the Other. One of the interpretations which Žižek offers to the dictum "The letter always arrives at its destination" is related to the concept of the real whereby the symbolic debt has to be repaid, that is, one cannot escape the consequences of one's actions.[45] Just as the minister in Poe's story assumes that the unhidden letter will escape the eyes of the police inspector, and the queen before him trusting that the king will ignore the protruded letter precisely because its position is utterly visible, so too is Chaudval persuaded of the disinterested appearance of the crime to the police although to him this crime constitutes redemption.

His decision having been made, the great artist picks up a pebble and throws it at the mirror, shattering it and saying "et maintenant, toi, tu ne refléteras plus personne." This is the moment which marks the will to destroy the moral voice of the law, whether questioning, decreeing or prohibiting. The Other of himself, who will render meaning or will ordain symbolic functions, is eradicated. Chaudval emerges as a subject who does not need the Other to signify his desire or aspirations. He has created an autonomous subject, independent of the consequences, whether physical or moral, which bind the subject to the social Other. He is pure subject of the real; all he

must do is commit the crime solitarily and retire, always in solitude, to the lighthouse. It is true that all traces in the symbolic will be erased, but he will gain access to a jouissance through his own action without the mediation of the Other. Since his link to the crime cannot be identified, and since he will remain alienated from his victims, his remorse will generate jouissance which is poles apart from the jouissance procured by the Sadean pervert from the pain he produces in the Other, his partner.

Let us recall the terms of the structure of perversion we have seen above: the Sadean fantasy consists of passing the bar of anxiety to the Other as victim of the crime and the torture, while the pervert disavows his own division and obtains pure jouissance from the suffering of the Other and thus is transformed into object and instrument of enjoyment. The shattered mirror blocks Chaudval's subjectivity in that it obstructs the division of the subject and congeals his separation from the suffering of the Other. He is simultaneously subject and object of jouissance: he is instrument of jouissance who will himself experience the (enjoyment of) pain which the Sadean fantasy obtains from the Other. The Villierian fantasy, then, presents a perversion unlike the Sadean experience, but whose ethics point to a libidinal economy supported by the symptom because it demonstrates that jouissance is bound with language and with the law.

Within two hours petroleum cellars in a populous Parisian district are set on fire, causing an infernal destruction and death to a hundred people. From a carriage, Esprit Chaudval watched the catastrophe with a radiant face:

> Ô miserable! grommelait-il, quelles insomnies vengeresses je vais goûter au milieu des fantômes de mes victimes! Je sens sourdre en moi l'âme des Néron,

> brûlant Rome par exaltation d'artiste! des Erostrate, brûlant le temple d'Ephèse par amour de la gloire!... des Rostopschine, brûlant Moscou par patriotisme! des Alexandre, brûlant Persépolis par galanterie pour sa Thaïs immortelle!... Moi, je brûle par DEVOIR, n'ayant pas d'autre moyen d'existence! – J'incendie parce que je me dois à moi-même!... Je m'acquitte! Quel Homme je vais être! Comme je vais vivre! Oui, je vais savoir, enfin, ce qu'on éprouve quand on est bourrelé. – Quelles nuits, magnifiques d'horreur, je vais délicieusement passer!... Ah! je respire! je renais!... j'existe!... Quand je pense que j'ai été comédien!... Maintenant, comme je ne suis, aux yeux grossiers des humains, qu'un gibier d'échafaud, – fuyons avec la rapidité de l'éclair! Allons nous enfermer dans notre phare, pour y jouir en paix de nos remords (*CC*, 215).

By contrast with the Sadean tormentor, the Chaudvalian fantasy is to enjoy the phantoms of his victims; he will not achieve sexual enjoyment through their bodies. Nor is he interested in prolonging the suffering by infinitely recounting the acts of torture; there is no lesson that he aspires to teach as do the Sadean perverts who lace their acts of violation with moralizing diatribes. Chaudval indulges in the sweetness and delectation of the fantasy of remorse over the suffering of his victims, but he can cherish the jouissance alone, in the peace of his stark lighthouse. The lighthouse, barren and barred from the Other, will witness the ghosts whose call will fill the structure with enjoyment. Until now Chaudval had been but an actor: “Quand je pense que j'ai été comédien!”. From this moment he is reborn as a subject because he will feel the exhilarating pain of remorse: “Quel Homme je vais être!”

One can conclude that Chaudval, object of jouissance, passes the bar to himself as subject of anxiety; in this structure of perversion the tormentor engenders his own subjectification. But his subjectification still draws from the symbolic of great incendiary figures; the crucial fact to observe is that while Nero, Erostratus, Rostopchin, and Alexander set temples and cities afire out of passions such as artistic fervor, desire for glory, patriotism or love, Chaudval surpasses them all for his moral cause is Duty. He internalizes the voice of duty in the injunction to assume responsibility and compassion for the Other, but in his logical quest for morality he in fact posits that the since the truest duty towards the Other consists in compassion in the form of remorse, the only way to achieve the absolute Man-ness is by first committing a ghastly crime.

The symptom which Chaudval bears points to a perverse level of ethics which paradoxically includes the conscious summoning of a will to act in the name of the Good. Against the momentum of playing other men's passions, Chaudval chooses the temptation of feeling these sublime passions himself; it is not only a moral calling to which he must answer, but an ethics of simultaneity of duty and right. Duty – "puisque l'âge me force de rentrer dans l'Humanité"; right – "J'ai bien le droit de devenir à tout prix ce que je *devrais* être." The ethical choice to enter humanity through the real entails the enactment of the aesthetic dimension, the incendiary sublimity of mythical figures, with whom Chaudval has endlessly identified on the level of the imaginary. Chaudval interprets what it means to be a man, and this meaning – as Lacan would say – returns to him from the Other in an inverted form. Let us recall that for Lacan if a symptom can be object of interpretation it is because

its very formation depends on and is enabled by the assurance that the (symbolic) Other will recognize it as symptom and will be triggered to respond to it. Žižek explains the articulation of the symptom and interpretation as follows:

> The symptom arises where the world failed, where the circuit of symbolic communication was broken: it is a kind of 'prolongation of communication by other means': the failed, repressed word articulates itself in a coded, ciphered form. The implication of this is that the symptom can not only be interpreted but is, so to speak, formed with an eye to its interpretation […] in the psychoanalytic cure the symptom is always addressed to the analyst, it is an appeal to him to deliver its hidden message […]. This […] is the basic point: in its very constitution, the symptom implies the field of the big Other as consistent, complete, because its very formation is an appeal to the Other which contains its meaning.[46]

For Chaudval the meaning of being a man returns from the very 'interpretations' of the roles of the Other he has performed in his career. Thus his symptom may be read as the fourth circle in the Borromean knot that ties the relation of the three Lacanian registers.

The havenly lighthouse to which Chaudval retreats to indulge in his remorse is in fact a deserted, useless, and antiquated structure ignored by all: "ce n'est qu'une superfétation, une sinécure" (*CC*, 215). The English edition translates "superfétation" as "excrescence," a term used by Lacan to refer to the uncanny remainder of jouissance thrusting, or 'insisting' from the real, and guaranteeing the consistency of the subject – the *sinthome*. The forgotten *phare*, to which Chaudval withdraws in

order to escape the entrapment of signification as the empty signifier of an actor, is nevertheless the object from within which he addresses the Other in waiting for the remorse over the crime. The social bond has not dissolved even in isolation – he erects a tall mirror to study his facial expressions. Furthermore, the lighthouse cannot even procure him theological (transcendental) redemption for it is nothing but a 'sinécure', an empty ecclesiastical office impotent of offering spiritual benediction.

With his retirement Chaudval begins to forget the event and is momentarily referred to as Lepeinteur – he loses his identity as the well-known actor. But the discovery of the published news of the devastating consequences of the crime launch him anew into the hope that the longed for apparition of ghosts will materialize. To no avail; the days pass and "[i]l n'éprouvait *rien*, *mais absolument rien*!" (*CC*, 217). All his attempts to recuperate a feeling of remorse by sending false signs to far-off ships in order to mislead them into sinking prove sterile in summoning the specters. The very specters constituting the enigmatic "*mobile*" for the crime which bewildered the desperate authorities remain invisible to Chaudval himself. He dies of a silence - the Silence of the ghosts.

In fact, Chaudval is redeemed for he does not die without having *felt* (éprouvé). First, upon reading that in honor of the victims of the catastrophe a benefit performance was held in the city, he reacts in regret: "– Tiens! j'aurais dû prêter le concours de mon talent au bénéfice de mes victimes! – C'eût été ma soirée d'adieux. – J'eusse déclamé *Oreste*. J'eusse été bien nature..." (*CC*, 217). Second, realizing his failure, he is seized with deathly agony of shame and despair at the disappointment of emptiness: "– Des spectres!... Pour l'amour de Dieu!... Que je voie, ne fût-ce qu'un

spectre! - *Je l'ai bien gagné*!"

It seems, then, that Chaudval does indeed realize the fantasy of experiencing feeling; in that he succeeds in passing the bar to himself and abandoning the position of object as pure will to jouissance that rejects the anxiety of castration – he feels. In this respect he resembles rather the historical Sade, who, as his biographers remind us, spent his time in prison waiting for his influential mother in law to intervene in his release. The historical Sade is not a pervert in so far that there were devoted subjects who suffered for him as "those who were at the first complacent toward his excesses will demonstrate, his wife, his sister in law – his valet – why not? – other devotions effaced from his history" (*KS*, 66). In decreeing that his ashes be scattered so as to vanish from all memory, Sade assumes the bar of the divided subject of unconscious guilt. He acts moreover according to the Lacanian notion of the ethics of the second death: Sade wished that the signifiers attached to his name die at the moment of his biological death. Sade's fictional tormentors, on the contrary, execute the symbolic death of their victims before their biological death, and that constitutes the perversion. Lacan remarks, however, that Sade has never disavowed or let go of the law because the apology for crime only pushes him to an indirect avowal of the law. The Supreme Being – Saint-Paul's or Robespierre's or eternal torture in hell– is restored in Evil. In a sense, his spirit is too prompt not to be lured by sin; he fails to foreclose a transcendental address and he does not achieve the state of the apathetic philosopher to which he aspires. [47]

Villiers further complicates things. Chaudval's last words indeed bespeak the suffering that characterizes the barred subject and not the pervert. But his agony is not

ultimately caused by the failure to feel, although the absence of remorse does render him a subject of perversion. Rather the ordeal he experiences is founded in the failure of his crime to conjure up the ghosts as did the figures whose narrative he had spent his life enacting. In other words Chaudval's anguish is brought on by the inability to carry the identification with the symbolic into the real. His grief is twofold: failure of the jouissance of remorse to be obtained through transgression of the Law prohibiting crime; failure to procure the jouissance of the literary Other whose symbolic value Chaudval had realized repeatedly and thus could not foreclose from the real.

The character of Chaudval is at once doubled and reduced; he is both tormentor executing a perverted fantasy and victim with no consistency of jouissance to support him. He is object, pure instrument of sadistic jouissance whose victims, even more than the Sadean victims, are pure symbolic artifacts, and castrated subject feeling guilt, shame, and alienation. He incarnates the voice of conscience, the voice of the superego which commands him to be the instrument of the Other's jouissance – encountering famous ghosts – as duty and as a universal right. He is the divided, feeling subject whose division fulfils the pervert's jouissance to its limit – his own death. He is also the ethical Lacanian subject who 'does not cede on his desire' and accepts, like Antigone, the symbolic death, his subjective destitution, since his involvement in the crime remains forever unknown: "On ignorait le nom du misérable qui avait commis ce forfait et, surtout, le *mobile* du criminel."

The object Chaudval desires answers to the Kantian formal imperative of the universal quality required of the cause: belonging to humanity is an indisputable universal right. The fantasy enacted in the story collapses the maxims of pure reason

and the impure right to perversion to a point which negates the possibility of love, passion or remorse. For his part, Chaudval collapses the signifier (of art) and the imaginary (of representing them) with the real (expecting the corresponding ghosts). He is, in Lacanian terms, pure symptom whose perversion is precisely the inability to recognize the division in the Other.[48] Historically speaking, Chaudval may be the symptom of the loss characterizing modernity which paved the way, as Lacan points out, for the Freudian articulation of the unconscious. Modernity allowed a conceptual shift in the subject's understanding and relation to his or her symptom, but which paradoxically fractured the peculiar relation to the animating (and subjectifying) object: the status of the object as loss has been undermined. The limits of transgression have shifted, but their displacement has not entirely severed the grip of the symbolic over the (nineteenth-century) subject; in pushing the limits of the quest for jouissance, Chaudval embodies the potential price of liberty (psychic and political): the *aphanisis* of passion, the disappearance of trust in the grounding principle of the king's authority or reason's integrity.

The Sadean pervert has recourse to hell as an eternal form of torture, his perversion fails to be self-containing and the repressed returns in the form of a transcendental point of reference. In Chaudval the reference needed to ascertain his ethical position is found in the space between the transcendental and the symbolic; the apparitions revealed to Nero and his companions are conjured up by the literary (and the theatrical). Villiers' achievement is to lay bare the function of the social Other in prescribing the adequate forms of jouissance and the intertwining of the law with fantasy.

Comparing works by Villiers and Léon Bloy, Magalie Jacquart distinguished between two genres of dark writing: "écriture à anathèmes et écriture cruelle."[49] The darkness (or evil) of Villiers' writing is inseparable from the irony and impassibility of the narrator. Confronted with an angry writing of Bloy's genre, the reader can but react acquiescently, hence passively. Villiers' narrator, by contrast, exhibits utter distance from the pain of his characters and tells a much more disturbing story because "[l'écriture] nous malmène, non en nous projetant dans un univers horrible, un imaginaire repoussant, mais en jouant avec l'ironie, et donc l'impassibilité. Cette écriture-là, c'est, au sens propre, une *écriture cruelle.*"[50]

Following this evaluation, Sade's writing can be seen as a discourse on speaking of evil, speaking evil. The project of the pervert, says Naveau, is to wound the Other, to do evil through speech.[51] We recall that Dolmancé seals the torture session in *Philosophie dans le boudoir* with the words "tout est dit." This silence denotes the sadistic fantasy for Lacan and which Jacquart expresses thus: "Le silence et la réserve, ambigus, sont bien plus éloquents que toutes les attaques." When neither remorse nor ghosts materialize, Chaudval is overwhelmed with disillusion: "Il n'en pouvait croire le Silence. Il n'en revenait pas" (*CC*, 217).

**What is a Ghost?**

*Le désir d'être un homme* is void of the discourse of evil; Chaudval has the deepest conviction that his act follows the universal criterion of morality requiring the subject to be a Man – the voice of duty speaks to him. His perversion adds another dimension to the reading of Kant's moral imperative that everyone is entitled to enter humanity through the experience of compassion for the Other. Chaudval inverts the

criterion and reintroduces the pathological object banned by Kant by making it the condition of possibility of ethical behavior: the subject will earn the right to be a man only on condition that he desire. For Lacan, the end of analysis, and the emergence or even production of the ethical subject, takes place at the traversal of the limit within which the subject and his desire are bound. Sade did not approach the question of desire, he remained bound to the law as necessary condition for transgression:

> It is not only that for him as for the rest of us the flesh is weak, it is that the spirit is too prompt not to be lured. The apology for crime only pushes him to the indirect avowal of the Law. The supreme Being is restored in Maleficence […].
>
> Sade thus stops, at the point where desire is knotted together with the law. If something in him held to the law, in order there to find the opportunity Saint Paul speaks of, to be sinful beyond measure, who would throw the first stone? But he went no further" (*KS*, 74).

Villiers pushed the articulation of the law and desire further for he pointed to the need for transgression itself. Indeed he throws a burning stone into the crowd because the voice of conscience, the perverse superego, dictates to him the truth of desire: the desire to reach the inaccessible point of jouissance beyond pleasure. The paradox in which he is trapped is the necessity to reach this point through the Other's body in a crossing of a frontier which produces pain. "Always, and however prolonged pain is supposed to be, it has nevertheless its term, the fainting of the subject." While the Sadean subject of perversion is inscribed in the sole quest for jouissance, Chaudval is impelled to desire, even to love.

In *Civilization and its Discontent*s, Freud writes that the Christian ethics of loving one's neighbor must be understood inversely: it is precisely because my neighbor is unworthy of my love that I must recognize him in myself. Lacan's reading identifies the recoil from the law as the same barrier from which I recoil in myself, the object-cause of my desire, my jouissance. We thus recoil from the "bottomless" cruelty of the jouissance within us as much as we ward off the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves.[52]

Chaudval is a failed pervert in so far that he sought to reject a subjective division by impossibly collapsing in himself jouissance with pain. The Villierian genre of the fantastic precisely invokes the ethics of the fantasy which stipulates that the fantasy is contingent upon the symbolic narrative of the subject and the imaginary effects it produces. The true object Chaudval attains is the object of loss itself which is the object of the drive – the enactment of loss, the loss of symbolic attachment. This movement constitutes the ethical insight in Lacanian psychoanalysis. Indeed Chaudval 'set himself straight with respect to his desires,' but in perversely crossing the limit of the fantasy he misapprehended the result of his mission and died of its very success, a barred, oscillating subject: "et le vieux histrion expira, déclamant toujours, en sa vaine emphase, son grand souhait de voir des spectres... – *sans comprendre qu'il était, lui-même, ce qu'il cherchait.*" A subject, for whom jouissance must forever be apprehended as spectral: Chaudval was a man because he failed to find happiness in evil.

**Notes to Chapter 4**

[1] Susan Nieman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) pp. 1-13.
[2] *Evil in Modern Thought*, p. 7.
[3] *Evil in Modern Thought*, p. 11.
[4] *Evil in Modern Thought*, p. 13.
[5] *Evil in Modern Thought*, p. 235.
[6] *Evil in Modern Thought*, p. 10.
[7] Joan Kessler, ed., *Demons of the Night: An Anthology* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), p. xii.
[8] Pierre Reboul, préface, in Villiers de l'Isle-Adam *Contes cruels* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p. 12.
[9] Jacques Lacan, "Kant with Sade," trans. James Swenson, *October*, 51 (1989), p. 55. All references to the essay will be henceforth noted in the body of the text as *KS*.
[10] Jacques-Alain Miller, "A Discussion of Lacan's 'Kant with Sade,'" in *Reading Seminars I and II*, eds. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink and Maire Jaanus (Albany: SUNY Press, 1996) p. 220.
[11] Maurice Blanchot, "Literature and the Right to Death," *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 318.
[12] The law here is enacted in the body of the freest figure of all, the figure of the widow, in this case the "Widow par excellence" (the guillotine).
[13] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/5683 Book I, Chapter I, Paragraph 64.
[14] Slavoj Žižek, "Kant with (or against) Sade," in *The Žižek Reader* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1999).
[15] The non- (or pre-) ontological status of *Jouissance* is expressed for Lacan through its inherently traumatic quality, whose existence can never be integrated into the subject's symbolic circuit since it has no positive ontological consistency: "'I' am in a place from which a void is heard in the purity of Non-Being. And not without reason, for by protecting itself this place makes Being itself languish. This place is called *Jouissance*, and it is the absence of this that makes the universe vain" "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 317.
[16] Donatien Alphonse François de Sade, "Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains"
http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ais,_encore_un_effort_si_vous_voulez_%C
[17] Immanual Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*
http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/kantgw.pdf p. 23.
[18] *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, p. 17.
[19] David Martyn, *Sublime Failures: The Ethics of Kant and Sade* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2003), pp. 19-20.
[20] Martyn's reading of Kantian and Sadean ethics of failure is informed by Derridian deconstruction through and through and is analyzed in terms of 'an ethics of writing.' Some of the conclusions he establishes in respect to Lacan's principal concepts and interpretations are highly arguable – e.g. the ethics of lack, the subject as ideal instance of the properly human – but their discussion is beyond the scope of this work. However, in his critique of the Lacanian frame of analysis, Martyn states that "[v]irtually none of Lacan's readers ever actually *cite* Sade – except to quote the Sadean "rule of *jouissance*" Lacan "enunciates" in "Kant with Sade," but which is not in fact by Sade at all." Furthermore, he affirms that

Lacan's essay is "at best a commentary on a constructed, distilled, or ideal "gist" or "content" of certain texts." *Sublime Failures*, pp. 185197. In fact, in footnote 8 of "Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains" Sade articulates a systematic explication of his rule which integrates much of the 'fictive' formulation Lacan devises in his version of the Sadean maxim: "Qu'on ne dise pas ici que je me contrarie, et qu'après avoir établi plus haut que nous n'avions aucun droit de lier une femme à nous, je détruis ces principes en disant maintenant que nous avons le droit de la contraindre; je répète qu'il ne s'agit ici que de la jouissance et non de la propriété; je n'ai nul droit à la propriété de cette fontaine que je rencontre dans mon chemin, mais j'ai des droits certains à sa jouissance; j'ai le droit de profiter de l'eau limpide qu'elle offre à ma soif; je n'ai de même aucun
droit réel à la propriété de telle ou telle femme, mais j'en ai d'incontestables à sa jouissance; j'en ai de la contraindre à cette jouissance si elle me la refuse par tel motif que ce puisse être." As to the characterization of Lacan's essay as a "highly mediated" and "distilled" approach to texts, see below my analysis of Villiers' "Le Désir d'être un homme."

[21] Alexandre Stevens, "The Paradox of the Universal," *'Kant with Sade': Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment* (London: London Society of The New Lacanian School Seminar 2003-2004, 2004), p. 21.

[22] Vicente Palomera, "The Sadean Fantasy," in *'Kant with Sade': Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment*, p. 36.

[23] Palomera comments that in Freud the discussion of masochism does not uphold the rejection of anxiety or castaration as clearly as in Lacan. In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" Freud writes that in the two pairs of opposites sadism-masochism and scoptophilia-exhibitionism the reversal occurs only in terms of aim of the instincts (or drives) and not in content. Although he says that "the essence of the process is the change of the object" between the self and an exterior other, in the elaboration of role of the infliction of pain in the procurement of pleasure he states that the enjoyment of pain is a primary masochistic instinct which can become the aim of a sadistic instinct as well. To clarify this thesis he develops the the relation between voyeurism and exhibitionism as the abandonment of an exteior object of gaze and the turning of the self into object with "the institution of a new subject to whom one displays oneself in order to be looked at." Unlike the case of sadism, what the voyeuristic instinct reveals is a preliminary auto-erotic direction whose object is the sbject's own body and only later does it seek to be looked at by another: "The only correct description of the scoptophilic instinct would be that all phases of its development, the auto-erotic, preliminary phase as well as its final active or passive form, co-exist alongside one another; and the truth of this statement becomes manifest if we base our opinion, not upon the actions which are prompted by the instinct, but upon the mechanism of its satisfaction." Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," *General Psychological Theory*: *Papers on Metapsychology*, trans. Cecil M. Baines (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991) pp. 83-103.

[24] "The true barrier which stops the subject before the unnamable field of radical desire inasmuch as it is the field of absolute destruction, of destruction beyond putrefaction, is properly speaking the aesthetic phenomenon inasmuch as it is identifiable with the experience of the beautiful – the beautiful in its bursting radiance, the beautiful which is said to be the splendor of the true. It is obviously because the true is not such a pretty sight that the beautiful is, if not its splendor, at least its cover […]. It stops us, but it also indicates to us the direction in which the field of destruction is found." *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Dennis Porter, (New York: Norton, 1992), p. 256.

[25] Jacques Lacan, "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 319.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Pierre Naveau, "The Mother-Daughter Relationship," in *'Kant with Sade': Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment*, p. 72.
[28] In this essay Naveau provides an enlightening analysis of the torture which Eugénie's mother, Madame de Mistival, suffers from the hands of Dolmancé aided by Eugénie herself in *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. The jouissance begotten in the crime is epitomized by the very prohibition to touch the body of the Mother. At the precise moment that Eugénie commits incest, adultery, and sodomy, Madame de Mistival faints prompting Dolmancé to say "il n'y a rien de si lubrique à voir qu'une femme évanouie." The Mother has split – in her litteral fainting – into a (lusted) woman and a mother. The ordeal ends with suture: the mother is violated by a valet suffering from syphilis and her vagina sewn up by her daughter, upon which Dolmancé terminates the act – and the novel – in saying "Tout est dit… Je ne mange jamais mieux, je ne dors jamais plus en paix que quand je me suis suffisamment souillé dans le jour de ce que les sots appellent des crimes." *Tout est dit* – for Lacan silence is the mark of the sadistic fantasy when no words can be said.
[29] "A Discussion of Lacan's 'Kant with Sade,'" p. 215. Miller notes that, surprisingly, Lacan never refers to the dilemma formulated by Kant in his work.
[30] Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson, http://137.189.84.1/Philosophy/Kant/rel/ p.16.
[31] *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 32.
[32] *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, p. 42.
[33] Jean-Michel Rabaté, *Jacques Lacan: Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature* (Palgrave: New York, 2001).
[34] *Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature*, p. 12.
[35] J. A. Miller, "Knowledge, Meaning, and the Real," *The Symptom: Online Journal for Lacan.com*, 7 (Spring 2006) http://www.lacan.com/newspaper7.htm
[36] As Rabaté recounts, the concept of the Borromean knot was given to Lacan by Valérie Marchand, a mathematician who participated with him in a seminar on topology. *Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature*, p. 156.
[37] "Le Sinthome," in *Ornicar?*, 10 (1977), p. 10.
[38] The annonated English translation notes that Boulevard du Temple was called Boulevard du crime for the numerous melodramas staged in its theatres. Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Cruel Tales*, trans. Robert Baldick, (New York: Oxford, 1985), p. 273.
[39]Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, "Le Désir d'être un homme, *Contes cruels* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), p. 208. All the references to the short story will henceforth be noted in the body of the text and designated by *CC*.
[40] *Cruel Tales*, p. 273.
[41] Here we can read the scene of the Terror, the confrontation between executioner and victim where the historical circumstances obscure the categories of guilt and innocence. The moment that shattered the integrity of the body politic and the Symbolic on which it rested.
[42] Pierre Reboul, the editor and annotator of the collection, comments that Villiers has frequented the backstage of theatres and aspired himself to theatrical success. He writes that this story has an oral character, inviting the reader to look and to listen to the performance of the protagonist and his intimate nullity. *Contes cruels*, p. 397.
[43] Jean-Louis Gault, "The 'Truth' of Kant's Moral law," in *Kant with Sade*, p. 10.
[44] In Corneille's *Sertorius* we find the verse "La grandeur de l'amour par la grandeur du crime."
[45] Slavoj Žižek, *Enjoy your symptom!* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 16.
[46] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object Of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 73.
[47] Pierre-Gilles Guéguen, "Desire and Jouissance," in *Kant with Sade*, pp. 55-59.

[48] The French psychoanalyst Charles Melman has recently proposed that modernity has engendered a psychic mutation expressed in the liquidation of transference, understood as the hitherto relation of the subject to authority, references, and knowledge. "Introduction à la nouvelle économie psychique" argues that modern society has transformed from a culture based on *representation* of the object whose unattainability sustains the desiring subject regulated by speech to a culture organized by *presentation* – a society that expects to experience the authentic object itself and does away with the mediation of the Symbolic (and the sacred). Globalization "presentifies" the object in a new language whose technical transparency and universality spares the subject from being divided, and produces a banalized and homogenized subject. The (Freudian) subject of neurosis (of lack) has become the subject of perversion, defined by exclusive investment in preserving indefinitely the object in its reality – jouissance is not only eternally sustained but equalized, sexual jouissance is no longer the paradigmatic form of jouissance. *L'Homme sans gravité* (Paris: Denoël, 2005). In our story, Chaudval may be strongly attached to the culture of representation and the Symbolic – where desire revolves around Ghosts, but Villiers' irony points to the paradox inherent to the self-conscious summoning of jouissance. See further discussion below in the Conclusion.

[49] Magalie Jacquart, "Deux cruautés 'Fin de Siècle': Les écritures noires de Villiers de L'Isle Adam et de Léon Bloy," in *Fin de Siècle?* Postgraduate Conference (Nottingham : University of Nottingham, 1998). Bloy, Villiers' contemporary and friend, was notorious for his fiery attacks on rationalism, his anarchist criticisms of complacent society, his anti-clerical Christian position, and his conclusion that he would write for "no one but God. " Interestingly, in 1906 (seventeen years after Villiers' death) Bloy published *La Réssurection de Villiers de L'Isle-Adam*, a eulogy for Villiers' whose dilatory glory and recognition confirmed the nullity of death. He wrote that Villiers "portait vraiment en lui les âmes de tous les grands de sa Maison et la liste en était longue. Il confabulait avec leurs ombres, ne cherchant pas irrespectueusement à les démêler, bien au contraire, et finissant par être heureux de ne plus savoir ce qui revenait, en bonne justice, à chacune d'elles. Il était d'ailleurs, je l'ai dit, un de ces rares adeptes qui nient la mort, se persuadant que l'autosurvie est un acte simple de la volonté at qu'il est incomparablement plus facile de s'éterniser que de finir [...]. Il avait même écrit pour son usage personnel, une fantaisie – hégélienne, hélas! – sur cet object, en vue d'établir qu'êtres et choses ne peuvent avoir d'autre maintient devant l'Infini que celui qu'il plaît à notre conscience de lui accorder" p. 6.

[50] "Deux cruautés 'Fin de Siècle,'" p. 15.

[51] Pierre Naveau, "The Mother-Daughter Relationship," p. 71.

[52] *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 219.

## Conclusion

If indeed a conclusion can be drawn at the end of these words it is that terror has a precarious standing when it is submitted to the scrutiny of a reader. If we have seen, particularly through the force of psychoanalytic theory, that the psychic and the Symbolic allow an understanding of the role of terror in the social bond, we have also recognized that the fundamentally structural function of terror necessarily eliminates accounting for terror through exclusive reference to the socio-economic order. Jean-Marie Apostolidès emphasizes the fact that the power of political terror to generate consensual intelligibility is conditioned on its deployment as symbol. His essay on the theatrical production of Sylvain Maréchal's Revolutionary spectacle *Le Jugement dernier des rois* in 1793 argues that in transforming the theatrical stage into a mise-en-scène of political questions, the play aims at depicting the acts of violence as necessary to the founding of a new social system.[1] Terror as signifier is 'activated' in the symbolic space: "It must be deployed as a symbol, it must reproduce itself in a spectacle in order to attain a power of authority without which it cannot survive."[2]

Can one think of an ethical act that excludes violence? Recent scholarship, some of which has been discussed in this dissertation, seems to suggest not only that it is incumbent on the modern intellectual to acknowledge the constitutive role of violence in subjectivity, but that the understanding of terror as structural opens up a space for social subversion. Embodying the inaugural moral theorist of terror, Robespierre does not hesitate to articulate the link between violence and ethics inherent to democracy in his speech before the Convention of 5 February 1794:

> Si le ressort du gouvernement populaire dans la paix est la vertu, le ressort du gouvernement populaire, en révolution est à la fois la vertu et la terreur. La vertu, sans laquelle la terreur est funeste; la terreur, sans laquelle la vertu est impuissante. La terreur n'est autre chose que la justice prompte, sévère, inflexible: elle est donc une émanation de la vertu; elle est moins un principe particulier qu'une conséquence du principe général de la démocratie appliqué aux plus pressants besoins de la patrie.

Žižek sees the terror executed by Robespierre as exemplifying Benjamin's divine violence, demanding unmediated justice and relinquishing all external moral guarantee by the big Other. In this view Robespierre's terror is an act of solitude, a means whose only ends is the annihilation of injustice and which does seek to reinstitute itself as new mythic sovereignty.[3] This theoretical disposition is akin to the definition of freedom as the ultimate and conscious ability to negate one's life: Blanchot sees in the French Revolutionaries of the Terror "beings deprived of being, like universal thoughts, pure abstractions beyond history, judging and deciding in the name of all of history."[4] One can contest the validity of the claim made by Žižek that the Jacobin revolutionary Terror is to be distinguished from law-preserving statist violence in that it had no objective of grounding new law, new sovereignty; but the Revolutionaries have indeed taught us that freedom means *to be* the law.

Benjamin's distinction between divine and mythic violence has underscored, then, the 'blind' and unmediated nature of the former, independent of meaning grounded in Being; divine violence is of the order of the event that signifies the excess of "bare life," life that is irreducible to regulation (even if the term "divine," as

discussed above, remains problematic). Just as important, however, is its call for readers to pay heed to the precariousness of violence as a site of passage between "divine" and "mythic;" this is the precise site where fascination with one may lure us to advocate the second. One recalls Foucault's comments on the essence of the Iranian Revolution as a moment of mobilization of a people whose objectives were not only to change the regime, remove the Shah, and transform the corrupt political organization of the country, but mostly to change themselves – a change in subjectivity. In this Islam played a role because "above all, in relation to the way of life that was theirs, religion for them was like the promise and guarantee of finding something that would radically change their subjectivity."[5] Foucault concedes that the institutions representing traditional doctrines do not provide an optimal answer to the radical transformation the people desires but are an inevitable point of departure for a forceful collective will incarnated by the Iranian nation. In comparison, one can grant Robespierre this legacy of upholding the democratic edifice: the collective resistance to the presentation of any ideology as *fate*, in precisely the Benjaminian sense, instantiated by anything other than (terroristic) justice.

For Lyotard the consensual superiority of capitalist democracy evacuates the notion of 'geonoetics' of all value. Thought no longer establishes its authority by connection to a land, and this shift constitutes epistemological terror because it bears on human rights, the status of immigrants and minorities, and the systemic functioning of judicial and educational institutions. So pervasive is the terror of consensual discourse that Lyotard, entitling his essay "Intime est la terreur," attributes its force to the draconian power of the Republic and its historical events, which

enforce the very desire of freedom, a gift redeemed with blood: "The horizon of universal intelligibility to which they appeal was opened up and cleared with a bloody stroke."[6] Art then must resist this terror by silencing consensual, familiar, learned rhetoric, and no one more suited to counter this terror than the lone writer, whose voice is legitimized by the (postmodern) creative movement past or beyond reason: *paralogy*. Lyotard condemns the all-subsuming narrative of freedom decreed by the Republic: "All motives other than the accomplishment of the law of freedom are subject to suspicion: passions, interests, everything that in the soul of the empirical people lends itself to tyranny."[7] But is that not Hegel's precise criticism of the fanaticism of the French revolutionaries who demanded that each individual consciousness grasp itself as the "Notion" of the collective will which can realize itself solely within the whole? "In this absolute freedom, therefore, all social groups or classes which are the spiritual spheres into which the whole is articulated are abolished […]. Universal freedom, therefore, can produce neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only negative action; it is merely the fury of destruction."[8] Modernity's pinnacle case of metanarrative – speculative philosophy – finds itself much in tune with the postmodern paralogical assertion that "freedom, first of all, is an Idea of Reason, which is never incarnated in practice without equivocation."[9]

Recent intellectual insights in France have pushed the limits of the 'post'-thought even further than the incredulity of reason and the legitimacy of modern metanarrative. Dominique Quessada proposes that contemporary thought has performed 'Othercide' – *altéricide*. Alterity has disappeared; the concept of the Other "a été démoli, rendu invisible, pulvérisé, démembré, exilé, réincorporé, métabolisé,

ou intégré."[10] Indeed the Other has not been simply repressed, only to predictably return as a (psychoanalytic) ghost, but it has been evacuated by integration; social, economic, and cultural aspects of globalization have dissolved the inside-outside dialectic of difference and opposition. This because the infinite plurality of differences, the very 'right to difference' and to unhierarchical consumption from material products to sexual identities is contingent on the deactivation of the Other's constitutive function of reining in differences.

In a similar vein, for psychoanalyst Charles Melman it is subjectivity itself that is threatened by the disintegration of the symbolic pact: human desire in its relation to the Other (or to an object) is conditioned on the relative stability of the signifying system whose lack sustains this desire. The modern subject has replaced sexual desire with series of jouissances provided by a global economy of images and digits that are displacing the symbolic world of the alphabet. We are thus submerged "dans une espèce de jouissance masturbatoire parfaitemnet autistique" whose ultimate consequence is "la polysubjectivité."[11]

One may recoil from such apocalyptic pronouncements arguing that they either represent instrumental ideological theoretizations, conservative or otherwise, or in attributing this radical determination of the death of subjectivity as we know it to a measure of intellectual maneuvering. But if there is a common sound humming in the works of the writers and thinkers whom we have followed throughout these pages, it is of an anxiety that is twofold: anxiety over the unknown outcomes of the social transformations we have been (always already) undergoing; and second, the recognition that social transformations can no longer be attributed to a metanarrative

gloss of any kind, and that an ethical reflection carries a literal responsibility: to examine the reflections generated by the inextricable relations through which opinions, events, and economies are contingent on one another. I purposefully do not use the terms ‘ideologies’, ‘politics’ or ‘socio-economic factors’ because they immediately situate us in discourse – in discourses – which is the very inevitable truth that ethical thought labors to remind us.

It is thus not essentially in the literal political pronouncements that Genet and Godard have expressed their moral manifestos, but rather in their ability to foreground and fictionalize reality through the aesthetic object of literature and film, and show how rhetorical and imagistic figures shape thought in discourse. To show the real of thought.

The pitfall of literary criticism is its fascination with the act of theorizing and the intellectual power this act can endow the critic. The question of origin reappears in these pages in its specificity as the question of framing: has Lacanian psychoanalysis framed the reading of Villiers’ short story? Has dialectical philosophy predetermined the encounter staged between Hegel and Benjamin or Lyotard? Leaving this question momentarily unanswered, let us note that this study opened with an early nineteenth-century philosophical positing that in order to articulate an ethical social order one must delve into the logic of the tenuous and contingent motor of subjectivity. We have closed with a return to the nineteenth century, to a later gaze on its pursuit of expressing the vagaries of desire. In the intervening space (not to say time), we have reflected on the ethical challenge that twentieth-century calamities pose for artists in their endeavor to represent them. If this temporal revolution has

significance, it is to prompt us to be cautious of historicist dramas, which hasten to overthrow matanarratives even as they usher in their replacements.

Perhaps our anxiety results from the recognition that Freud and Lacan's conception of the Other has become too palpable: the Other's discordance is inherent in the dimension of universality but this 'inhuman' quality also defies universal communicability. We cannot ignore the Other's jouissance and this ambiguity, providing no external ethical standards, generates alternative metanarratives. Peter Sloterdijk's comment on Quessada's notion of *altéricide* captures this ambiguity of the (French) intellectual of the twenty-first century, expressing "ce regret parce que la révolte a échoué, ou pis encore, parce qu'elle a abouti à ce que nous vivons."[12]

The terror of annihilation is also the ethics of Freud's concept of the undoing (*Ungeschehenmachen*) of the symbolic system, the effacement of one action by another, or Lacan's "second death" in the symbolic unmaking. For Hegel the supreme power of Spirit is the moment of the 'negation of the negation', the pivotal moment of the dialectic in which the subject posits iself as its own negation, that is, engaged in the non-neutral actual reality, experiencing its particular stakes in *contrast* to the universal notion in question – identity, patriotism etc. This is the subject of "subjective freedom," who recognizes the function of contingency in ascribing being to a notion or a truth-content. From the moral point of view, says Hegel, the contingency of the will in its abstract state has been overcome in so far as it has 'passed' into a reflection within itself, and is now the "infinite and inwardly present contingency of the will, i.e. its *subjectivity*."[13] Let us be both humble and hopeful before we pronounce the death of subjectivity.

**Notes to Conclusion**

[1] Jean-Marie Apostolidès, "Theater and Terror," in *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought*, eds. Jean-Joseph Goux and Philip R. Wood (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 135-44.
[2] "Theater and Terror," p. 144.
[3] Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008), p. 202.
[4] Maurice Blanchot, "Literature and the Right to Death," *The Work of Fire*, trans. Charlotte Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 320.
[5] Michel Foucault, "Iran: The Spirit of a World without a Spirit," conversation with Claire Brière and Pierre Blanchet, in *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and Seductions of Islam*, eds. Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005), p. 255.
[6] Jean-François Lyotard, "Terror on the Run," trans. Philip R. Wood and Graham Harris, in *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought*, p. 34.
[7] "Terror on the Run," p. 33.
[8] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 357, 359.
[9] "Terror on the Run," p. 33.
[10] Dominique Quessada, *Court traité d'altéricide*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), p. 58.
[11] Charles Melman, *L'Homme sans gravité* (Paris: Denoël, 2002), pp. 114, 117.
[12] *Court traité d'altéricide*, p. 30.
[13] G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 132.

**Bibliography**

Afary, Janet and Anderson, Kevin B. *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*: *Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

Apostolidès, Jean-Marie. "Theater and Terror." Jean-Joseph Goux and Philip R. Wood, eds., *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Arendt, Hannah. *On Revolution*. New York: Penguin, 1990.

———. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1951.

Baudrillard, Jean. *L'Esprit du terrorisme*. Paris: Galilée, 2002.

Benjamin, Walter. "Critique of Violence," *Reflections*. New York: Harvest/ HBJ, 1979.

———. *Illuminations*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968.

Bergala, Alain. "Helas pour moi ou du présent comme passé légèrement corrigé." *Cinémathèque*, 5 (Spring 1994).

———. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, II*, 1984-1998. Alain Bergala, ed. Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1998.

Bernstein, Richard J. *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2002.

Bersani, Leo. *The Culture of Redemption*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.

Bersani, Leo and Dutoit, Ulysse. *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity*. London: British Film Institute, 2004.

Blanchot, Maurice. *L'Amitié*. Paris: Gallimard, 1971.

———. "Literature and the Right to Death." *The Work of Fire*, 300-344. Trans. Charlotte Mandell. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Bougon, Patrice. "Un captif amoureux." *L'Infini*, 22 (Summer 1988), 109-26.

Bougon, Patrice. "The Politics of Enmity." *Yale French Studies*, 91 (1997), 141-58.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project.* Cambridge: MIT Press 1991.

Carrier, Peter. *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory Cultures: France and Germany since 1989*. New York: Berghahn, 2005.

Chakali, Saad. “Notre Musique/Jean-Luc Godard.” *Remue.net* (Automne 2005). http://remue.net/spip.php?article957.

Chéroux, Clément. *Mémoires des camps*: *Photographies des camps de concentration et d’extermination nazis 1933-1999*. Paris: Marval, 2001.

Collins, Jo, and Jervis, John, eds. *Uncanny Modernity: Cultural Theories, Modern Anxieties*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Combs, Richard, and Durgnad, Raymond. “Chapter and Verse,” *Filmcomment* (Jan.-Feb. 2005).

Conan, Eric, and Rousso, Henry. *Vichy, un passé qui ne passe pas*. Paris: Fayard, 1994.

Coole, Diana. *Negativity and Politics*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

*Crystal Reference Encyclopedia*. "Vanitas." *Crystal Reference Encyclopedia*. Crystal Reference Systems Limited. 18 Jan. 2007. <Reference.com http://www.reference.com/browse/crystal/33219>

Derrida, Jacques. “Prénom de Benjamin.” *Force de loi*. Paris: Galilée, 1994.

———. “Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of ‘Religion’ at the Limits of Reason Alone.” Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo, eds., *Religion.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, pp. 1-78.

Didi-Huberman, Goerges. *Images malgré tout*. Paris: Minuit, 2003.

Dronsfield, Jonathan. “‘The Present Never Exists There’: The Temporality of Decision in Godard’s Later Film and Video Essays.” Michael Temple and James S. Williams, eds., *The Cinema Alone*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000.

Ellison, David. *Ethics and Aesthetics in European Modernist Literature: From the Sublime to the Uncanny*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

El Omari, Basma. “La Dernière Image du monde.” *Etudes françaises* 37:3 (2001), 129-46.

Finburgh, Claire. “Jean Genet and the Poetics of Palestinian Politics: Statecraft as Stagecraft in ‘Quatre heures à Chatila.’” *French* Studies, 56:4 (2002), 495-509.

Foucault, Michel. “Iran: The Spirit of a World without a Spirit.” conversation with Claire Brière and Pierre Blanchet. Janet Afary and Kevin B. Anderson, eds., *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and Seductions of Islam*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2005.

Fredette, Nathalie. “Genet politique, l’ultime engagement,” *Etudes françaises*, 29:2 (1993) 83-102.

Freud, Sigmund. “Instincts and their Vicissitudes.” *General Psychological Theory*: *Papers on Metapsychology*. Trans. Cecil M. Baines. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991, 83-103.

———. “The Uncanny,” trans. James Strachey. http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~amtower/uncanny.html.

Gault, Jean-Louis. “The ‘Truth’ of Kant’s Moral law.” *Kant with Sade*: *Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment*. (London: London Society of The New Lacanian School Seminar 2003-2004), 1-15.

Genet, Jean. “Entretien avec Rüdiger Wischenbart et Leila Shahid Barrada.” Austrian radio, 6-7 December 1983. *L’Ennemi déclaré*: *textes et entretiens.* Paris: Glimard, 1991.

———. *Les Bonnes*. Paris: J.-J. Pauvert, 1954, pp. 12-13.

———. *L’Ennemi déclaré: textes et entretiens.* Paris: Glimard, 1991.

———. *Prisoner in Love*. Trans, Barbara Bray. London: Pan Books, 1989.

———. *Un captive amoureux*. (Paris: Gallimard, 1986).

Godard, Jean-Luc. Montreal Film Festival, 1995. http://www.filmscouts.com/scripts/interview.cfm?File=2800

———. *I, a Man of the Image*. *Sight & Sound*, 15:6 (June 2005), 28-30.

———. “Je reviens en arrière mais je vais de l’avant.” *Télérama* (May 2001), 2679.

Goux, Jean-Joseph, and Wood Philip R., eds. “The French Exception: End or Continuation?” *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

Guéguen, Pierre-Gilles. “Desire and Jouissance.” *Kant with Sade*: *Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment*. (London: London Society of The New Lacanian School Seminar 2003-2004), 55-59.

Hankins, Jérôme. ed. *Genet à Chatila*. “Les Palestiniens”. Paris: Editions Solin, 1992.

Hanssen, Beatrice. *Critique of Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Trans. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

———. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 3 vols, ed. Peter C. Hodgson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984-5.

———. *Introduction to the Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. Trans. H. B. Nisbet. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

———. *Lectures on the Philosophy of history*. Trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956.

———. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

———. *Science of Logic*. Trans. A. V. Miller George. New York: Allen and Unwin, 1969. http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/hl_index.htm

Heidegger, Martin. *Introduction to Metaphysics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.

Heidegger, Martin. *On the Essence of Language: The Metaphysics of Language and the Essencing of the Word*. Trans. Wanda Torres Gregory and Yvonne Unna. Albany: SUNY Press, 2004.

Hill, Leslie. "'A Form That Thinks': Godard, Blanchot, Citation." Michael Temple, James S. Williams, Michael Witt, eds., *For Ever Godard*. (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004).

Ishaghpour, Youssef. *Archéologie du cinema et mémoire du siècle*. Paris: Editions Farrago, 2000.

Jacquart, Magalie. "Deux cruautés 'Fin de Siècle': Les écritures noires de Villiers de L'Isle Adam et de Léon Bloy." *Fin de Siècle?* Postgraduate Conference (Nottingham : University of Nottingham, 1998).

Jarczyk, Gwendoline, and Labarrière, Pierre-Jean. *De Kojève à Hegel: Cent cinquante ans de pensée hégélienne en France*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1996.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgment*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987).

———. *Critique of Practical Reason*. http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/5683 Book I, Chapter I.

———. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. http://www.earlymoderntexts.com/pdf/kantgw.pdf

———. *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. Trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson. http://137.189.84.1/Philosophy/Kant/rel/

Kessler, Joan. ed., *Demons of the Night: An Anthology*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995.

Knowles, Dudley. *Hegel and the Philosophy of Right*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Norton, 1978.

———. "Kant with Sade." Trans. James Swenson. *October*, 51 (1989).

———. "Subversion of the Subject and Dialectic of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious." *Écrits: A Selection*. New York: Norton, 1977.

———-. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953-4*. Jacques-Alain Miller, ed. Trans. John Forester. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

LaCapra, Dominic. "Lanzmann's *Shoah*," in *History and Memory after Auschwitz*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998.

Lanzmann, Claude. "Hier ist kein warum,"in Michel Deguy, ed., *Au sujet de Shoah: le film de Claude Lanzmann*. Paris: Belin, 1990.

Lecercle, Jean-Jacques. *The Violence of Language*. New York: Routledge, 1990.

L'Isle-Adam, Villiers de. *Cruel Tales*. Trans. Robert Baldick. New York: Oxford, 1985.

———. "Le Désir d'être un homme." *Contes cruels*. Paris: Gallimard, 1983.

Lyotard, Jean-François. *Rudiments païens*. Paris: Union général d'éditions, 1977.

———. "Terror on the Run." Jean-Joseph Goux and Philip R. Wood, eds., *Terror and Consensus: Vicissitudes of French Thought*. Trans. Philip R. Wood and Graham Harris. Stanford: Stanford Unibersity Press, 1998.

MacCabe, Colin. *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at 70*. Bloomsbury: London, 2003.

Marty, Eric. "Jean Genet à Chatila," *Les Temps Modernes* (January 2003).

Martyn, David. *Sublime Failures: The Ethics of Kant and Sade*. Detroit: Wayne State University, 2003.

Marx, Karl. *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Joseph O'Malley, ed. London: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Melman, Charles. *L'Homme sans gravité*. Paris: Denoël, 2002.

Miller, Jacques-Alain. "A Discussion of Lacan's 'Kant with Sade.'" Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink and Maire Jaanus, eds., *Reading Seminars I and II*, eds. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996.

———. "Knowledge, Meaning, and the Real." *The Symptom: Online Journal for Lacan.com*, 7 (Spring 2006). http://www.lacan.com/newspaper7.htm

Morrey, Douglas. *Jean-Luc Godard*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

Naveau, Pierre. "The Mother-Daughter Relationship." *Kant with Sade*: *Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment*. (London: London Society of The New Lacanian School Seminar 2003-2004), 61-73.

Nieman, Susan. *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University press, 2002.

Nora, Pierre. *Les Lieux de mémoire*. Paris: Gallimard, 1984.

Oswald, Laura. "Middle East Voices." *Diacritics*, (Spring 1991).

Ozouf, Mona. "The Terror after the Terror: An Immediate History." Keith Michael Baker, ed. *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Vol. 4: *The Terror*. New York: Elsvier Science Ltd., 1994.

Palomera, Vicente. "The Sadean Fantasy." *Kant with Sade*: *Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment*. (London: London Society of The New Lacanian School Seminar 2003-2004), 30-45.

Plunka, Gene A. *The Rites of Passage of Jean Genet: The Art and Aesthetics of Risk Taking*. Madison, New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992.

Quandt, James. "Here and Elsewhere: Projecting Godard." Michael Temple, James S. Williams, Michael Witt, eds., *For Ever Godard*. London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004.

Quessada, Dominique. *Court traité d'altéricide*. Paris: Gallimard, 2007.

Quinet, Antonio. "The Gaze as an Object." Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus, eds., *Reading Seminar XI*: *Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 139-48. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995.

Rabaté, Jean-Michel. *Jacques Lacan: Psychoanalysis and the Subject of Literature*. Palgrave: New York, 2001.

Radcliffe, Ann. "On the Supernatural in Poetry." *The New Monthly Magazine* 7 (1826), pp. 145-52.

Ragland, Ellie. "The Relation between the Voice and the Gaze." Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus, eds., *Reading Seminar XI*: *Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 187-204. Albany: SUNY Press, 1995.

Rancière, Jacques. *La Fable cinématographique*. Paris: Seuil, 2001.

———. "La Sainte et l'héritière: A propos *des Histoire(s) du cinéma*, *Cahiers du cinéma*." 537 (1998), 58-61.

———. "Who is the Subject of Human Rights?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3, (Spring/Summer 2004), 297-310.

Reboul, Pierre. In Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *Contes cruels*. Paris: Gallimard, 1983.

Robespierre, Maximilien. "Dernier discours prononcé devant la Convention le 8 Thermidor
an II." http://membres.lycos.fr/discours/8thermidor.htm

Rosenzweig, Franz. *L'Etoile de la rédemption*. Paris: Seuil, 1921.

Roth, Michael. *Knowing and History: Appropriations of Hegel in Twentieth-Century France*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

Rousso, Henry. *Le Syndrome de Vichy*. Paris: Seuil, 1990.

Russell-Watts, Lynsey, and Walsh, Lisa, eds. *Terror and Psychoanalysis*, *Nottingham French Studies*, 46:3 (Autumn 2007).

Sade, Donatien Alphonse François de. "Français, encore un effort si vous voulez être républicains"
http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ais,_encore_un_effort_si_vous_voulez_%C

Said, Edward. "On Jean Genet's Late Works." *Grand Street* 9 (1990), 26-43.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *L'Etre et le néant: essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*. Paris: Gallimard, 1943.

Sha'ath, Nasr Jamil. Published in *La-tset! An Anthology against the War in Gaza*. Etgar, Maarav, Sedek, Daka, Maayan and Guerilla Tarbut, eds. (Hebrew). Tel Aviv 1.1.2009. Trans. Mira Reinberg.
http://documents.scribd.com/docs/48306ixmpxjqwetei2v.pdf.

Silverman, Kaja. *The Threshold of the Visible World*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

Smith, Steven. *Hegel's Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Spinoza, Baruch. *Ethics*, Part Two, Proposition 18, Scholium. Trans. G.H.R. Parkinson Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000.

Stern, Robert. *Hegel and the Phenomenology of Spirit*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Sterritt, David. *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

——— *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews*. Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1998.

Stevens, Alexandre. "The Paradox of the Universal." *'Kant with Sade': Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment*. London: London Society of The New Lacanian School Seminar 2003-2004, 16-29.

Stockhausen, Karlheinz. In Anthony Tommasini, "Music; The Devil Made Him Do It." *New York Times* (September 30, 2001).
http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/30/arts/music-the-devil-made-him-do-it.html

"The Virgin of Tenderness."
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0422/is_4_88/ai_n17093713/pg_7?tag=artBody;col1

Wajcman, Gérard. "De la croyance photographique." *Les Temps Modernes*, 56:613 (March-May 2001).

Witt, Micael. "The Godard Interview: I, a Man of the Image." *Sight & Sound*, 6 (June 2005). http://www.bfi.org.uk/sightandsound/feature/313/.

Wood, Allen. *Hegel's Ethical Thought*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Žižek, Slavoj. *Enjoy your symptom!* New York: Routledge, 1992.

———. “How to Live with Catastrophes?” Begoña Aretxaga, Dennis Dworkin, Joseba Gabilondo, and Joseba Zulaika, eds., *Empire and Terror*, 201-216. Reno: University of Nevada, 2004.

———. *Interrogating the Real*. New York: Continuum, 2005.

———. “Kant with (or against) Sade.” *The Žižek Reader*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1999.

———. “Robespierre or the ‘Divine Violence’ of Terror.” http://www.lacan.com/zizrobes.htm 2007.

———. *The Sublime Object Of Ideology*. London: Verso, 1989.

———. *Violence*. New York: Picador, 2008.